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LADY

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## SONNETS TO A LADY

**A**



# Sonnets to a Lady

By  
Ernest Druce

“Σκοπεῖσθαι δέ, εἰ τι πρὸς ἐκείνο τείνει, πρὸς τὸ ποιῆν κατιδέειν  
ῥῶον τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ιδέαν. τείνει δέ, φαμέν, πάντα αὐτόσε, ὅσα  
ἀναγκάζει ψυχὴν εἰς ἐκείνον τὸν τόπον μεταστρέφεσθαι ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶ τὸ  
εὐδαιμονέστατον τοῦ ὄντος, ὃ δέι αὐτὴν παντὶ τρόπῳ ιδεῖν.”

PLATO, *Repub.*, Book VII.

“E se le fantasie nostre son basse  
A tanta altezza, non è maraviglia.”

DANTE, *Parad.* x. 46.



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## Preface

POETRY rightly so called is the expression and play of pure intellect busying itself with forms of the beautiful which it contemplates in their permanent and unchanging relations. It inhabits the sphere of ideas, which it attains to by passing from the imperfect manifestations of them in visible things to the essential conceptions of which the objects around us bear more or less clearly defined traces. Thus we are conscious of goodness in action or character, and the contemplation of that quality in the particular instance can raise our thoughts to the conception of the ideal, that is to say, of the Divine Goodness. It is the same with other qualities which excite our admiration or the reverse; but more particularly does this statement hold good with respect to the Beautiful and its various manifestations. Who has not felt the peculiar and soul-shaking emotion which is some-

times occasioned by the mere passing glimpse of a beautiful woman's face? Nor is this emotion only to be attributed to the natural attraction of the sexes. The highest kind of beauty, which is to be seen nowhere but in the human face, and consequently nowhere so perfectly as in the face of woman, exercises a species of attraction which appeals to the whole soul and intellect. Of all known motive powers, it lays hold of the being of man most strongly, and, in a wholly unexplained manner, forces him for a time to raise himself into those higher regions of the ideal where the world of the becoming and the passing (*τὸ γιγνόμενόν τε καὶ ἀπολλύμενον*) is forgotten. Goodness of character when displayed in the forms of eminent self-sacrifice and devotion, as also the display of intellectual power, will sometimes affect us in a similar manner; but it is none the less true that for the soul in a healthy moral state, Beauty is the most efficient power for lifting it out of the realm of the temporary into that of the eternal. I say for the soul in a healthy state, for except when in the enjoyment of such a state, it is impossible for it truly to live in the regions of pure speculation, or to experience

the deep and lasting emotion which the contemplation of the Beautiful is capable of giving. This limitation is the expression of a truth which is too often neglected or forgotten, but which is nevertheless a truth of the highest importance; and the law laid down by Ruskin, which was so much questioned by some of his critics, that the production of any work of High Art implied a sound moral state in the producer, is verified by everyday's experience. It is a law which holds good alike in the case of the individual and of the nation. Great periods of national art-productiveness have been periods when the moral life of the nation was, as a whole, healthy and sound—when the spiritual life still triumphed over the sensual life. Take away this condition—let the sensual life triumph over the spiritual life, and instantly, as in the case of Greece, after the great age of her literature, productiveness is at an end. It was the same with the Italy of the Renaissance: the intellectual flame was extinguished by the voluptuous indulgence which reigned supreme in the early half of the sixteenth century. In England the fire of Genius slumbered under the gross vapours of the Restoration period, nor did it

again burst through victoriously iridescent until society had attained to something of a purer atmosphere in the closing years of the eighteenth century. Poetry and Art, while they have sometimes in their degenerating state proved the incentives to licentiousness, are, when found at their highest pitch of excellence, the expression of the intellect working at its best and freest, *i.e.*, in the condition in which it is least hampered by the sensual and temporary. So far is the mind from being capable of producing a work of really High Art, be it poem or statue, or painting, unless when it is so working in a free and unhampered condition, that it is not even possible for it otherwise to feel the emotion which the contemplation of a beautiful object can impart, and, by means of the impulse which that emotion gives, to raise itself into the world of ideas where alone pure activity is attainable. In view of this it may be truly stated that there can be no genuine art-production except where the moral nature has been trained to a perfect self-control, and where it is consequently in a state of health. The Christian Religion teaches us that the kingdom of Heaven is only open to those who have died to the world: it

is also true that the kingdom of art-production is only open to those who have the mastery of their passions.

Some who read this will perhaps say that the acts are against me, and will bring as evidence the lives of poets and artists who have been notoriously immoral livers, and who have yet produced works which are recognised as being excellent. Lord Byron wrote works of great excellence, and so did Rousseau. But neither in the one case nor in the other was a genuine and permanently high level of art-production attained. Neither of those writers achieved the "passionless renown" of the poet who, by means of his art, gives adequate expression to the great and immutable realities of life. Neither of them lived, moved and had his being as the truly great poet or artist or sculptor always has his wholly in the realm of ideas. Both of them were deeply immersed in the slime of things temporal, in the fluctuating unrealities of the becoming and the passing, which is always the penalty that a man pays for allowing himself to be subjugated by his passions instead of himself subjugating them, and neither of them could rise, except occasionally and

by some supreme effort of genius to the heights where true and clear art-productivity is possible. Both of the illustrious men whom I have named were endowed by nature with a rare and wonderful gift of perception, an exquisite sensitiveness to all that was beautiful. But this very sensitiveness was their undoing. Having no moral control over themselves, the emotion which was imparted to them, and which they experienced in excess, was not mastered and made the means of transporting them to the realms of real being, that is to say, of the ideal, but itself gained the mastery over them, and became the instrument of their overthrow, immersing them deeper and deeper in the bondage of that which fluctuates. "Byron," said Goethe, "had too much *εμπειρία*," his mind was too deeply saturated with the experience of common life, an experience he was unable to throw off, and the results of which were bitterness and cynicism. In the heart both of Byron and of Rousseau there was a constant and fierce struggle to cast aside that which trammelled their genius and impeded their efforts to attain to calm and adequate production, but their strivings being ill-directed, and neglecting the only

possible means which could have ensured to them the desired end, they were naturally unsuccessful. And hence the wailing, the bitter lamentation, and invective—hence the rebellion against established and immutable ordinances—which in place of the sunny calm that always accompanies the really adequate production of genius, so often characterises the work of both of them. “Storm and stress” is the sign of conflict, not of victory.

Poetry then is the expression and play of the intellect in the contemplation of the Beautiful. This may be taken as a definition of Poetry in its simple and “classical” form. The Poetry of Greece and Rome certainly does not reject the aid of sentiment and feeling, as, indeed, what Poetry could do so? but its main and essential characteristic is a purely intellectual conception of beautiful objects. It regards that which is beautiful in form or feature, and gives it you again—reproduces it—exactly as it sees it, without comment or sentiment in most cases, and leaves it to make the same impression upon the reader’s or the hearer’s mind, which it made upon that of the poet in the first instance. The poem is troubled with no moral reflections; it gives you the



looks and the limbs of Venus in all their loveliness, and it never stops for a moment to enquire what your views are as to the propriety or otherwise of admiring them. It is childlike in its innocence and simplicity, or rather it is entirely ignorant of the questions which are agitated or hushed-up in our modern everyday life. But it must in nowise be accounted immoral. It says :—"Here is clear loveliness : this is exactly as I saw it : to look on beauty is the highest pleasure of which my soul is capable : you also may enjoy that pleasure in an equal degree if your nature will permit of your doing so." And this is the end of the whole matter. No pains have been spared to give you an exact reproduction of the beautiful object, not perhaps in its actual proportions, but in its ideal proportions, not, it may be, just as it existed, but in such wise as to give in its utmost perfection the impression which the contemplation of it was calculated to make upon the minds of observers. In doing this, Greek Poetry and Greek Art were affording the best possible means to the intellect of escaping from temporary and passing things to the realm of pure essences, that is to say, of ideas. But it is only by dwelling permanently in

this region of ideas that the mind of man is conscious of true freedom and is capable of unimpeded activity ; and consequently in affording men's minds the means whereby to reach this region, Greek Poetry and Art were conferring a blessing of inestimable importance upon those who could turn it to advantage. Greek Poetry and Greek Art gave freedom to the intellect.

Beautiful, however, and in their operation beneficent as they were, that Poetry and that Art were not the be-all and the end-all of existence in things intellectual. Could men's moral health have remained unimpaired—could they have resisted the corrupting influences of luxury and idleness satisfactorily, apart from Christianity, and in pre-Christian times have dwelt sound at heart and good, there is no telling to what heights classical culture might have reached. But this was impossible, and the inevitable consequence was, that the things which should have been the means to lead mankind to a nobler life, became the ministers of vice and wickedness ; and the glamour of verse and the enchantment of sculpture were made subservient to the gratification of every debasing impulse. It was not long before the sensibility to beauty had become extin-

guished, and with the attainment of this result, the possibility of art-production was of course abrogated. Sensibility to beauty being only possible in a healthy moral state, it follows that art-production is only possible in that state.

With the rise and spread of Christianity, men's habits of thought and feeling underwent a complete and radical change. After the lapse of centuries when the new belief, with its revivifying power, had become deeply engrafted in men's hearts, and intertwined with their modes of thinking and expressing themselves, an entirely new kind of poetry arose, which in some respects was as much superior to classical poetry as the religion of mediaeval Catholicism, of which it was the outcome, was to the religion of Pagan Greece. The old polytheistic religion looked no deeper than the outward forms of things, and, as has already been stated, the art interpretation of classical times contented itself with the idealised presentment of the beautiful as it was manifested in external objects. But the poetry like the religion of Catholic Christianity proceeded by an entirely different method, and aimed at an entirely different end. It turned from the external form as of com-

paratively little value, and confined its attention, if not exclusively, yet almost exclusively, to that which lay behind the form, and of which it hardly deigned to consider the form as an indication. But in doing this it found a beauty which was undreamed of by the ancients ; it opened up a whole province of ideas and conceptions which was concealed from the greatest of the poets who had preceded it. In place of beauty of form it looked for the beauty of holiness ; in place of physical excellence it sought spiritual excellence. For the Venus of Greek sculpture it gave us the Beatrice of Dante ; and while the soul of mankind was poured out prostrate in worship at the feet of the Madonna, the most exquisite loveliness which Art had shed on the features and limbs of the girl-forms of antiquity seemed only an affront to the spiritualised grace, the lofty conception of womanhood, which was symbolised and concentrated in the paintings and sculptures of the Mother who looked smiling on her Child from the canvases and marbles of Raphael and Michael Angelo. A mighty revolution of incalculable importance to the human race was effected in art and literature : new visions of beauty burst

upon the gaze on every side, and while the poetry of Catholicism seemed exempted from the somewhat narrowing limitations which had bounded the efforts of the creative imagination in its earlier flights, it seemed also to have a superiority no less marked in the importance of the truths—the realities of man's existence—with which it dealt, and which were, so to speak, the background against which its representations were depicted. Man's life and activity were no longer bounded by the few brief years of his span on earth. He was no longer merely the creature or the sport of chance or destiny. He was brought into intimate and awful relationship with the immeasurable powers of good and evil, and actions and feelings which had once seemed of slight consequence, were no longer to be looked on as indifferent, but were recognised as involving unending happiness or misery. In our own day, even the sublimest truths of religion have a tendency to become familiar and unimpressive, but we must remember that there was an epoch when the Revelation which was brought by Christianity of the worlds beyond the grave, came with more startling force to men's imaginations than say, the

discovery of America in the age of Ferdinand and Isabella, or than would be caused now by the full and authenticated disclosure of the modes of life which are in vogue among the inhabitants of Mars. When men became Christians they approached all questions with a new and solemn sense of responsibility, and this very sense which forbade them to give themselves up to the unrestrained enjoyment of the beautiful in outward form, compelled them to concentrate their attention more absorbingly upon the loveliness of spiritual things. The transformation was most clearly discernible in the change which passed over the conception of Love. As far as we can judge by their remains which have come down to us, the nations of antiquity had no notion of the tender and exalted sentiment of respect and devotion which now passes by that name. In place of it they had at best only a sincere admiration of beauty and excellence of character; and it is noticeable that whereas modern poetry is either given up unreservedly to the glorification of love, or at any rate is busied chiefly with what concerns it, classical poetry chose rather for its theme the display of fortitude or of some other manly virtue. If a modern

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poet were desirous of rousing in his readers the affections of pity and terror, it is hardly possible that he would fail to choose for his subject some story either of slighted love and the despair consequent upon its ill-success, or some tale of misfortune in which at least love played a very important part. A Greek poet of the age of Pericles, on the other hand, would never have chosen such subjects; it would have been impossible for him to do so. He would have preferred to elaborate some story of greatness overthrown when at the height of its power and prosperity, and that perhaps not by any inherent weakness in its own character but by the action of the gods or Fate. And in connection with this latter remark, it is important to bear in mind that the Fate of the Greeks, as it is represented in the plays of the great classical dramatists, is by no means always a blind and merely mechanical necessity, but is, at least in some instances, a reasoning and designing agency, which brings to pass events that have been long foretold, and that by the careful adaptation of means to the particular end in view. So that the Greek tragedian's idea of Fate seems at times to differ but little from our modern idea of Providence.

However, this is somewhat apart from my subject, except that it leads me to venture the reflection that this very notion of an omnipresent and irresistible Fate itself often supplied, in the writings of the classical poets, the place of the sublimity and grandeur of sentiment which a modern poet can impart to his work best by the ideal treatment of Love. It was the best available substitute for it.

The first of the kinds of poetry which I have mentioned here, is called "Classical"; the second is generally spoken of as "Romantic." "Christian" would, however, be a more suitable name, since the essential characteristics of this kind of poetry are directly traceable to the influence of Christian thought and sentiment.<sup>1</sup> Nor is it the form only which has been changed—the whole spirit of modern poetry is entirely different from that of the ancients, and it is different chiefly in these respects that its guiding principle has been from the start the exaltation of woman's love, and that it is endowed with a perception of spiritual beauty in place of the classical

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<sup>1</sup> The sneer of Voltaire that it only remained to convert the poets and the Jews, was a poor one, whatever may be said as regards the poets, poetry had been "converted" long before Voltaire's day.



love of mere beauty of form—in other words, it has a sense of the beauty of holiness which was denied to the ancients. And this sense and this guiding principle it derived, and could only derive, from Christianity.

There are other kinds of poetry which have obtained the recognition of European culture. There is the poetry of the Sagas, and of the *Nibelungen Lied*. There is also the popular poetry of Oriental peoples which is embodied in the *Arabian Nights*' tales. Neither of these species of poetry ever attained to that excellence of form and expression which ensures a very high or permanent place in the literature of the world. The *Nibelungen Lied* indeed will live, and deserves to live, by force of its wonderful energy, and of the pictures which it gives of a barbarous time. The Arabian tales appeal to the imagination in a way in which hardly any other species of composition does appeal to it, and the strength of the attraction which they have for us lies in their infantile but often suggestive interpretation of the mysteries of Nature and existence. The two great kinds of poetry, however, which permanently command the intellect of mankind, are

those which are generally spoken of as the "Classical" and "Romantic" kinds, but which I would prefer to call the "Classical" and "Christian."

Some will perhaps ask what all this has to do with the Sonnets which are published in this volume. The answer is that the truths which I have here mentioned can hardly be too strongly or too often insisted on, and that unless the reader knows something of the standpoint from which a writer approaches his subject, he will not be able to appreciate as he should do, the work which is offered for his enjoyment. At the present time, too, it seems necessary, if ever, to recall the attention of the reading public from a too exclusive study of matters of form and technique, in poetry—the merely mechanical skill of the poet—and to do something, if possible, to induce people to study and to participate in that which is really the essence of poetry, the spirit which animates the form, and of which the form itself is only the dress or expression. Certainly there is no need to-day to direct attention to matters of technique and mechanical skill. Books of verse are published daily; in every newspaper there are poems which give evidence of technical

skill in the manipulation of language—the current poetical diction—of a very high order; skill which might sometimes without exaggeration be called exquisite. The only thing which in these books of verse seems wanting is not a meaning—for no one would dream of looking in any such place for anything so substantial as a meaning—but some sign that the writer had ever at any time in his or her life *meant* anything at all. The lines teem with beautiful phrases and words—words and phrases which *lived* in the poems of Keats and Tennyson, but which can hardly be said to live in their new settings; “moon-blanced lilies,” “dew-bediamonded,” and hosts of similar expressions. But the spirit, which is the life of poetry, is too often absent.

No age is without its sweet singers. There are always those who in fluent verse, and with cultivated graces of language, are ready to adorn the whims and the follies of the time, or who set to music perhaps the more serious but passing aspirations and thoughts of their contemporaries. And these for a time are often the most popular poets, since their verses appeal to passions and are understood by masses of people who have no interest in, or have

nothing in common with, the sentiments which are appealed to by those whose theme is the soul of man and the great and unchanging truths which have relationship to the soul's life. But however fluent the versification of these poets whose writings are for the time so popular—whatever may be their intellectual cultivation or the graces of their style and diction—unless they can raise themselves from the sphere of the temporary and passing into the realm of the ideal, of the permanently true and satisfying, their writings like themselves will soon be swept from the stage of observation, that other fluent singers, with views of a similar tendency, may take their place and in turn pass also. It is the enduring nature of his subject, of the sentiment which he sings, that can alone give permanence to the poet's song, and although of course no poet can neglect matters of style or technique—although the critic must always insist on the due fulfilment of his requirements in those particulars—particulars in themselves by no means unimportant—it is his *theme* by which he will live, if he does live, it is the spirit and not the form or expression which will in the long run command attention. The ideal of Beauty

and Love, if worthily sung, will give immortality ; the most graceful exposition of current and passing thoughts and feelings, will not long save a poem from oblivion. We are interested with ditties which give a touch of humour or a graceful turn of expression to the sentiments of the barrack-room or the billiard saloon, but on the whole we feel that those sentiments will contribute nothing to the sum of human happiness.

The Sonnets which are here published form only a portion of a much larger number which have been written on various subjects and on many different occasions. Whether or not they will be found to correspond in any way to the ideal which the writer kept before him in the composition of them, must of course be judged by others, but the views of poetry which he has sketched in this preface, were those by which he tried to guide himself in writing the verses. It is one thing to aim high and another thing to hit the mark aimed at, but it is sometimes better to fail gloriously in one's endeavour, than to obtain immediate success, however gratifying, at the expense of that which alone can make the success lasting.

E. D.

# Sonnets

## I.

ON Mousa's lonely isle there stands a tower,<sup>1</sup>  
As ancient (so authentic records tell)  
Almost as is the shore—the citadel  
It was of some old race in danger's hour :  
There round it long the storms their utmost power  
Have spent upon its walls ; with ceaseless knell  
The waves moan round its base, and sea-birds dwell  
Niched in its caverned sides from skies that lower.  
Their story from these crumbling stones to learn  
The mind of man indeed may vainly strive,  
For hardly now can even conjecture rive

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<sup>1</sup> Mousa is one of the Shetland islands : it is about nine miles from Lerwick. The author visited the spot while on a yachting cruise to Norway in the summer of 1903. The island, which is uninhabited, is of small extent, its length being about a mile and its breadth something less than a mile. It is chiefly interesting from the fact that it is the site of one of those curious prehistoric round towers which are dotted here and there about the Northern islands and the extremity of the mainland of Scotland. The round tower on Mousa is the most perfect extant of these remains of antiquity, which are sometimes thought to be of Pictish origin. It stands in a picturesque hollow between sloping hills and is only a few feet from the sea at the entrance of a somewhat narrow channel which divides Mousa from the mainland. The tower

The gloom of years from which no lamp to burn  
Survives, if such once was : Beside her urn

The Past waits closely veiled our doubts to  
shrive.—

## II.

Here dwelt the beauteous Thora when she fled <sup>1</sup>  
From Norway with the Son of Brynulf; here  
In this old tower, a dwelling ah, how drear

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is built of rough, unhewn stones, which are placed together without mortar, and which are now covered with lichens. It rises to a height of forty or fifty feet, but the skyline is of broken and irregular appearance, many of the stones having been hurled down from the top apparently by the action of the wind. Its form, too, is irregular, the lower half bulging out considerably from the perpendicular, while again the upper part seems to be broader than the middle. Large numbers of birds find shelter in the gallery which winds round and round in the interior of the wall, and the sound of their wings as they sweep down suddenly to its summit over the head of the chance visitor is often very noticeable. On the opposite side of the sound there are the remains of what appears to have been a similar tower, and the impression left upon the mind is that of two forts, placed one on each side, at the entrance of the channel, as if for the purpose of preventing an enemy's ships from sailing along it.

<sup>1</sup> It was in the Round Tower on Mousa that, according to the "Orkneyinga Saga," the beauteous Thora, an eleventh-century "Maid of Norway," flying from the pursuit of enraged parents with her lover, Bjorn Brynulfson, found refuge for a whole winter. The Saga relates that the happy couple, secure as they were in each other's affection, were

For beaوتous bride and lover newly wed ;  
But Love that chooses oft the lowly shed  
    And from the palace turns, could even endear  
    These hoary walls to them whose only cheer,  
Was Nature's own providing, roughly spread!  
Ah me ! Poor dove, her spotless wings from flight  
    She folded here, so meekly on her breast,  
    And only in her lover's arms confessed  
The thought that long had been her dear delight,  
The love she bore him which could so unite  
    Their hearts in this wild spot and make them  
    blest !

. . . . .

## III.

Her forehead was like ivory, and her brow  
    Was like the wings outstretched of some sweet  
    bird,  
The shapeliest the sun looks on. Men preferred

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yet so unfortunate as to be wrecked on this desolate island and forced to remain here until, with the return of Spring, they managed to make good their escape to Iceland.



The beauty of her looks to that still flow  
Of sweetest light that from the sunset's glow  
    Spreads o'er the mountains when with beams  
        unblurred,  
    The west is kindled, and no sound is heard  
But ocean's distant murmur pulsing low !  
O yes, the glory of the sunset yields  
    To woman's beauty, and no form so fair  
    As her's whose looks we dote on ! Beauty there  
Dwells in its most transcendent form and wield  
The sceptre none may shrink from ! In the fields  
    Of Heaven the shapes that please, *her* semblance  
        wear !

## IV.

And ah, her voice ! How often folks averred  
    That when she spoke such music as of old  
    The drowsy shepherd caught by haunted fold  
Or glade, poured not from heart of man or bird  
But from the sun-god's pipe, and only heard  
    On some still solemn eve of summer gold,  
    So wound them with its cadences that cold

Their hearts became to aught that else had stirred !  
For never could the nightingale whose bill  
Pours to the dewy woods its glad refrain  
So charm their hearts, or with so sweet a strain  
Make them forgetful of all thoughts of ill ;  
And when she ceased their hearts were listening  
still  
For silence filled them with too real a pain.

## v.

The musk-rose has its beauty but its leaves  
Had by her lips been vanquished in the field  
Where they had striven for mastery, and to yield  
Their colours had been forced ! One captive  
heaves  
At times upon her breast and there receives  
New beauty from her looks, wherein revealed  
All beauty shines, for still she loves to wield  
Her charms with mercy, and for sorrow grieves !  
And so the flowers took counsel and ordained  
That she should be their Queen, and for the Rose  
Whose proud presumption such unnumbered woes

Had caused them in the past—their hearts were  
    pained  
To break the links that all so long had chained,  
    But Love its homage to the loveliest owes !

## VI.

The laughing Dawn her beauty to behold  
    Looked through the casement once, and straight-  
        way grew  
    Enamoured of her sweet cheek's pallid hue  
And of her hair that lay in wavy fold  
Upon her shining neck, more bright than gold ;  
    And seeing that she slept beside her drew  
    And stole some precious kisses, ah, if few  
Or many now, what matters to be told !  
He was to blame, and still Aurora's looks  
    Upbraid his fondness : though her lips each morn  
    Are meekly given to his, not less with scorn  
She hears his protestations and rebukes  
His faithless words with frowns : the fields and  
    brooks  
    Know with what heartfelt pangs his breast is  
    torn !—

## VII.

Some said her teeth were pearls and then declared  
That never from the deep came pearls like those,  
Nor could the earth, nor could the seas disclose  
Gems of like worth and beauty. Ill had fared  
The gambler who the desperate stake had dared,  
At hazard of his peace or soul's repose,  
With gem or pearl to match those matchless rows  
From all the treasures gnomes and fairies guard !  
The pearl that slept on Cleopatra's brow  
With milky paleness flashed upon the sight,  
Yet was than those twinned charms how much less  
white !  
And the lithe nymphs that sported round the prow  
Of him whose hand once plucked the golden bough<sup>1</sup>  
With gems less fair adorned their tresses bright !

## VIII.

To say her ears were shells of delicate mould  
But ill conveys their beauty, though there sleep  
Strange marvels in the convolutions deep

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<sup>1</sup> "Corripit extemplo Æneas, avidusque refringit Cunctantem," etc.  
—*Virgil, Æn.*, Book VI, line 210.

Of the shell's onyx curve: How more than cold  
Are such comparisons ! In times of old  
    Resemblances would to the surface leap  
    That men might take them shining : we but keep  
The worn similitudes their bounty doled !  
The light-veined conch the stooping traveller sees  
    Washed by the sun-warm wave in lands afar,  
    Where round his path the crumbling ruins are  
Of old Sidonian cities, ne'er might please  
The eye that once to sate itself with these  
    Had learned, whose perfect form no fault may  
    mar !—

## IX.

Her sweet complexion was the fatal field  
    Where that old warfare did itself renew,  
    And those two rival queens their pennons flew,  
While neither to the other's claims would yield.  
Full proudly now the Red advanced her shield  
    Against her sister's confines to subdue  
    That which was justly hers to her own hue,  
And then the White her heart to pity steeled !

So still the strife with various fortune raged,  
And neither owned the other's title good ;  
Two beauteous queens they were and of one blood  
Who thus with all their powers this conflict waged,  
And never aught of one the zeal assuaged  
But roused afresh her sister's flagging mood.

## x.

As where, in some old garden's mossy ways,  
Its clusters bright the bold laburnum swings,  
What time in June the goldfinch piping sings  
And charms the air with his full-throated lays,  
The modest lilac oft her blooms displays  
Whose beauty to the soul such gladness brings  
As comes with lowlier thoughts and holier things  
Than those whose outward brightness courts the  
gaze ;  
Her gown of lilac hue, when with the throng  
She sometimes mixed, outshone the vain attire  
Of those who dressed as might the mode require,  
And paced a blaze of gold the crowds among,  
So that they felt its beauty did them wrong,  
Because men's eyes would none but this admire.—  
c

## XI.

This lilac-coloured gown of her's was cause  
Of much confusion and perplexed the wise,  
Who, failing knowledge, fables would devise  
Accounting for its making, clause by clause,  
Which now full well may give conjecture pause !  
Gravely they state the fairies mixed the dyes  
Of such ingredients as their Queen supplies  
For her own use, in realms that own her laws,  
And that the silk was woven by the hands  
That spin the gossamer threads that clothe the  
Dawn,  
When Autumn from the Orient comes : long-  
drawn  
The glades their aisles extend, whose pines like bands  
Of waiting courtiers bend : the light expands  
And shows all decked in white the glistening  
lawn !

## XII.

Her girdle was uplifted to the skies  
As a new constellation, and sheds there  
Its influence on the mild and balmy air

When Spring her bliss pants o'er the world in sighs  
And the glad Pleiads with new brightness rise  
As if till now the nights were never fair ;  
Whereat the Cyprian Queen was wont declare  
She meant full soon to make that zone her prize ;  
Else men, she knew, would hold her charms but  
cheap  
And leave her shrines deserted more and more  
To worship those new lights, oft from the shore  
Watched by the sailor when to tempt the deep  
His bark he seaward drags : there on the steep  
Her temple shines which once he sought of  
yore !—

## XIII.

Her hand the chaste concealment of the glove  
Kept from the view when through the town she  
walked,  
That prying admiration might be balked  
Of its desire or e'er it turned to love,  
Yet did that churlish covering often prove  
Attraction's very self, and gallants talked  
Of nothing else but gloves, or brooding stalked



Apart, with thought to take such treasure-trove !  
And, sooth to say, might lovers' prayers avail,  
Or sighs deep-heaving from the grief-wrung  
breast,  
And brows kept darkly knit, and lips close prest,  
Or downcast looks that tell love's piteous tale,  
And folded arms, and cheeks grown lank and  
pale,  
Not all, perchance, in vain had been their quest !

## XIV.

Her smile alone was Heaven, nor lacked there  
throng  
Of those who to that state of bliss would come  
Through bitter pangs and fiery martyrdom  
Of rival Hates that made them suffer long,  
And Envy sore that barbed her adder's tongue  
With wicked, guileful words, and else was  
dumb  
Only to wound in silence, whence the hum  
Of scandal rose, and all her dismal song.

But those who to that Heaven at last attained,  
A recompense for all their strife and stress  
Received, so that they hardly wished were less  
The pangs by which that blest reward was gained :  
They only knew the hopes that long sustained  
Seemed merged beyond all hope in joy's excess !

## xv.

And, certes, that she was of mortal kind  
Were some who doubted, and with reasons fair  
Made known their views, for never gift so rare  
As her's of beauty, was in one combined  
With every melting grace the most refined,  
And every virtue which the Saint may share  
With highest Heaven that gives them, mingled  
there  
In sweet proportion most to charm the mind !  
Nor was the air which round her breathed, more  
bright  
(So Fancy dreamed) with such ethereal hues  
Only that men might in her looks peruse

The traits of beauty that give most delight,  
But that belief which only grows with sight  
Might shed upon their hearts its healing dew !

## XVI.

No wings adorned her shoulders, lest for pride  
Men should mistake her meekness, and proclaim  
She only wore her angel plumes to shame  
Those who dwelt round her, and in her descried  
A sister woman only ; but to hide  
The Angel in her looks, for praise or blame,  
She had no power, and those who blessed her  
name  
Knew that she walked a woman glorified !  
Yet oft the dream, delusive to the sight,  
Her wings displayed, with points of tapering  
flame  
That o'er her head bent sweetly—whose the  
blame ?—  
And the long downward trails of living light  
That swept where'er she moved, as if to smite  
The heart that doubted still with deeper shame !

## XVII.

The quivering sunbeam from the cloud ne'er glanced  
O'er shimmering lake or dew-besprinkled lawn,  
An instant brightening and as quickly gone,  
As lightly as her step where'er it chanced,  
Nor with its passing brightness more enhanced  
The beauty of the places where it shone ;  
In crowded thoroughfares the well-worn stone  
Her foot but touched, would hold the gaze  
entranced !  
As when the tuneful chords vibrating swell,  
The lingering sweetness fills the listening air,  
Such was the charm that all her movements fair  
Wound o'er the soul that gazed, nor rarer spell  
The Muse I wis e'er from the sounding shell  
Or trembling string might wake, nor spell so rare !

## XVIII.

In summer when the meadow-grass was bright  
With yellow flowers, and wimpling streams ran  
clear,  
She walked abroad to bless the bounteous year

With her glad presence which gave more delight  
Than songs of birds or blossoms pink and white  
That like to streamers on the trees appear,  
Where round old drowsy farms the orchards rear  
Their boughs with promise to make glad the sight.  
And when the gleaners homeward made their way  
At evening where the stubble fields were spread  
Beneath the Autumn moon that round and red  
Shone o'er the darkening woods with mellowing  
ray,  
She loved along the dewy lawns to stray  
And watch the swallows in their flight o'erhead !

## XIX.

And when the streams were frozen and the ice  
Lay on the level mere like smoothest glass,  
When morning saw the hoar-frost on the grass  
And all the ground was held as in a vice,  
Within her heart she planned a project nice  
For Winter's overthrow, and brought to pass  
Full soon the thing she planned, for where alas !  
Was power that could to thwart her will suffice !

Her looks, right well she knew, could always make  
Bright summer of the cloudiest winter's day,  
And when she smiled 'twas never aught but  
May,  
And so she chose abroad her walks to take  
Beside the rime-bound trees and frozen lake,  
And smiling, laughed the dismal glooms away !

## XX.

No doubt the farmers blessed her for the plough  
Along the glebe again the furrow made ;  
The jocund peasant, homeward toiling, laid  
Upon his blazing hearth the groaning bough  
Which in the steaming woods was lopt but now ;  
The shepherd's pipe was heard in field and  
glade  
Where tripping late full many a buxom maid  
Kept tryst with one who breathed love's faithful  
vow !  
No more the herdsman, loath to lift the latch,  
Went slowly shuddering forth into the cold  
Each bitter biting morn, while from the wold

The kine close-huddling came beneath the thatch  
That friendly gave them shelter : now his catch  
With gladsome brow the loitering plough-boy  
trolled !

## XXI.

The birds around her bower with tuneful skill  
Plied their best notes her fancy to detain,  
And piped such descants, morn and eve, amain,  
As made the listening air for rapture still ;  
The towering poplar felt an unknown thrill  
Dart through its fibres at each untried strain,  
And shepherd boys their flocks upon the plain  
Left idly wandering while they dreamed their  
fill.

The nightingale contended with the thrush  
And scarce outsang her, and the linnet burst  
Her heart to reach the note she had rehearsed  
In dreams the night before, in one full gush  
Of most melodious utterance, and the hush  
Came, and no more the melting strain she  
nursed !

## XXII.

Her lover wandering far in distant lands,  
Knew that her heart from his naught could divide,  
Though now to them were looks and smiles denied,  
And silent tokens borne by trusty hands,  
Which Love from Love receives and understands ;  
Ay, though between them rolled the ocean wide,  
And bore him on still farther from her side,  
Where cities fair were reared by foreign strands !  
There was no need of bird with silver wing  
To bring him tidings, nor of written line  
Penned by her beauteous hand, though for such sign  
Of her dear favour, grief would sometimes wring  
His heart in absence—for God wrought a thing  
That made his heart stand still—his heart or mine !

## XXIII.

For whereso'er he wandered, near or far,  
Herself she still was with him, and the light  
Around his noonday pathway was more bright—



There was a newer radiance in the star,  
A beauty in all things that move and are  
In earth and Heaven and ocean, and the sight  
That beauty could interpret, read aright,  
And hold communion where was found no  
bar !

All Nature's various aspects were to him  
But the revealments of her wondrous grace,—  
Fair summer landscapes melting into space  
Far as the eye could reach, with mountains dim  
That faintly rose along their outmost rim,  
Or scenes where such mild beauty has no place !—

## XXIV.

Nor only so ! She whispered in his ear  
The message of her love, in the still hour  
Of darkest midnight, in the shine and shower  
Of summer skies, in winter dark and drear !  
To her the future made its purpose clear  
And she to him revealed it, and with power  
Her spirit poured around him as his dower  
Of strength in danger, still most close and near !

And oft in dreams her beauteous arms were flung  
Around his neck, and on his brow her hair  
Fell with its touch divine dispelling care,  
So that he walked like light the clouds among  
And held high converse in an unknown tongue  
With the blest forms that have their dwellings  
there !—

## xxv.

Who sings of Thora and the lonely isle  
Of Mousa, in the wide Atlantic main ?—  
Ah me ! The Muse a worthier of her strain  
Sings in the lines that now my hours beguile  
While from your side I linger, sad the while !  
Could but the verse your beauty render plain  
To others' gaze, as in my heart remain  
Those traits infixed, how lofty were the style !  
Not Thora, oh, not Thora ; you I sing !  
It is your beauty makes the page more bright  
If now my words have aught of loving light,  
And from the records of the past I bring  
Only her name and story, where I string  
The thoughts of her who is my own delight !

## XXVI.

If she was beautiful I know not. Why  
Should I concern me with her beauty ! Fair  
She may have been, and those old songs declare  
The son of Brynulf loved her, and to fly  
From those bleak northern gulfs beneath that sky  
That frowns o'er hills which lift their summits bare  
Into the clouds that swathe them, she could dare  
For love of him who for her looks would sigh !  
But for her looks I borrowed where I love,  
And drew *your* portrait—Sweet, you will forgive ?  
For many an age that portrait shall survive  
That other hearts than ours its worth may prove,  
And feel, ah ! not the charms my heart that move,  
Yet something of the rapture which they give !

## XXVII.

Yet sitting by that tower an afternoon,  
My thoughts flew back again to that old time,  
And found her story, told in prose or rhyme,  
Was not without its beauty. Could the moon

Impart to those wild scenes a gracious boon,  
And while her beams made that old wall sublime,  
Place there again those lovers in that clime  
Where once they dwelt from Autumn say till June,—  
Could she do this, it were well worth the while  
To pay a visit to the spot some night,  
Yourself and I, Sweet, when the waters bright  
Lay hushed and hardly breathing many a mile ;  
But Ah ! for now methinks I see you smile,  
To thought alone must be confined that flight !

## XXVIII.

And Lady, now, her song draws to a close ;  
If it has pleased you it has gained its end !  
With what heartfelt devotion I commend  
These lines to your dear keeping, my heart knows,  
And in the verse too, something haply shows,—  
For as the thought was given the words were  
penned,  
And scant the time to alter or amend  
The phrase, there faultiest oft where feeling glows !

Ah, would the lines were worthier of those eyes  
Whose glance might make the dullest words to  
shine,  
Or even in pedants' breasts a joy divine  
Infuse, to take them wholly by surprise,  
And make them from their grovelling periods rise,  
With something of the force that lives in mine !

## XXIX.

But your own beauty was, how oft, the cause  
That foiled me of my purpose ; for I felt  
The splendour of your eyes too brightly melt  
Into my soul—to give my rhyming pause ;—  
Thought lacked expression, though expression's  
laws  
Extended wider than Orion's belt !  
And only in your eyes I looked, and knelt  
In worship which the soul most closely draws !  
The rapture which your looks too well impart  
Absorbs the soul so wholly that thought fails  
To grasp their varying aspects, and Love quails

Yet lives, and knows its own deep joy, which Art  
Can never more than hint at, or in part  
Clothe with weak words in verse and poets'  
tales !—

. . . . .

xxx.

I turn again the page on which I pored<sup>1</sup>  
In the first hours of my awakening youth,  
When Poesy flung wide the halls of Truth

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<sup>1</sup> This Sonnet and those which immediately succeed it have for their subject the writings and the fate of the unfortunate poet, Chatterton. While little more than a child, that wonderful genius produced works of the most astonishing merit, and actually succeeded in deluding the learned world of his time into the belief that he had discovered a number of poems and poetical fragments which were the work of a monk who lived in the fourteenth century. That these so-called Rowleian poems were in reality the work of Chatterton himself has now been demonstrated by Professor Skeat, but for a number of years even the most learned had doubts as to whether there was not a genuinely ancient element, to say no more, in the poems. A long controversy raged on the question of their authenticity, and many even strong arguments were adduced in favour of their antiquity, nor was the matter set definitely at rest until the eminent modern scholar brought the poems rigidly to the test of the scientific method. But how wonderful was the genius of the child who could in this way for so long deceive the learned world, and that by the production of poems, which whatever may be their

D

To my young footsteps that her realms explored,  
 And to mine eyes unlocked her wondrous hoard,  
     The golden marvels of the dreaming South,  
 And many a goddess form whose Grecian mouth

---

merits or defects as regards the closeness of their imitation of the old English vocabulary, yet for their poetry deserve to rank with the compositions of the greatest masters of the English language! Well might Dr Johnson, when, on the occasion of his visit to the Church of St Mary Redcliffe, some specimens of Chatterton's forged antiquities were shown to him, exclaim, "I cannot understand how the young whelp could write them!" In reading the poems of Chatterton, one is irresistibly reminded of the words of Goethe, which he spoke in the hearing of Eckermann:—"In poetry," said Goethe, "especially in that which is unconscious, before which reason and understanding fall short, and which therefore produces effects so far surpassing all conception, there is always something 'dæmonic,' *i.e.*, something which is the gift of a superhuman intelligence." If there was ever anything "dæmonic" in the writings of poet, surely it was in the writings of Chatterton! Let anyone read again the wonderful lines of the minstrels' song in *Ælla*, beginning—

"Come sing unto my roundelay,  
 Come drop the briny tear with me!"

or that wonderful chorus in "Goddwyn: a Tragedy,"

"When Freedom drest in bloodstained vest,  
 To every knight her war-song sung,"

and he will at once understand the force of Goethe's remark about the "dæmonic" in poetry. It is to be regretted that, admirable as is in many respects the work of Professor Skeat, where only criticism is concerned, when he has attempted to modernise the text of Chatterton, he has failed so signally. Could anything be flatter than some of his

Glows with the love that finds no marble word !  
The page of him whose accents are as fire  
    To rouse the soul that all too long has lain  
    Drowsed in the lap of dreams, from Fancy's train  
That come, yet never prompt to strike the lyre,  
Or scale the difficult heights, where those respire  
    Whose crowns were plucked, long since, from  
        mortal pain !

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emendations ! Look at the substitution of " weapon " for " anlace " in one of the lines of the chorus to which I have referred.

" A gory weapon by her hung,"

for

" A gory anlace by her hung,"

as Chatterton wrote it. And there are innumerable instances, where the offence is even worse than in this, scattered throughout his edition of the poet's works. It is not to be denied that a good deal of the charm of Chatterton's writings consists in the peculiar and antiquated diction which he used, and which, whether spurious or not, from the point of view of the etymologist, has at anyrate a fine old-world flavour about it, and is often suggestive and poetical in a very high degree. But in the case of " anlace " there was not even the excuse of spuriousness : " anlace " is as genuine a word as " weapon," and a hundred times more poetical.

Chatterton committed suicide at the age of seventeen years and nine months, when he was upon the verge of starvation. Lord Byron thought that Chatterton was mad, and there is certainly very much to be said for this view.



## XXXI

The secrets of an age for ever flown  
Were his to keep or tell, and so he chose  
To tell in part and keep in part, and close  
The volume where he read them ! To disown  
The skill that gave, seemed strange, but high and  
lone  
His genius walked strange paths and knew strange  
woes,  
And from the depths he bodied with what  
throes  
The forms that to his ardent gaze were shown !  
Oh no, the child of Genius may not choose  
To give or keep ; he must the thought un-  
fold  
That lives within his heart, nor leaves untold  
The dream whose wings have tinged his heaven with  
hues  
More fair than setting suns in ours infuse,  
Else were our lives hemmed in with clouds too  
cold !

## XXXII.

The vision was of splendour such as comes  
To minds that live for beauty and can find  
No rest but in its fulness : gleams that blind  
The grosser sense of those whose thought assumes  
A passing brightness while the lamp relumes  
The page whose treasured ore, long deftly mined,  
Gives them its wealth for substance, unconfined  
Flowed o'er him, and lit far the wasteful glooms,—  
The wild abysses where lurk the shapes that haunt  
The realms of madness ; as the sunbeam smites  
The clouds grown black, with fire, and quivering  
lights  
The waves receding from the winds that chant  
A dirge predicting earthquake while they plant  
The banners of the tempest on the heights !

## XXXIII.

He dreamed of those old times when monkish walls  
Gave shelter to the studious, and contained  
All which from those remoter years remained

Of human culture ; and till Time recalls  
The sap to feed the bough that lifeless falls  
    Lopt by the wayside where its verdure gained  
    Freshness and beauty once, the thought that  
        pained  
The dream in him, some sadness yet forestalls !  
The stately form that now was laid so prone  
    Was once a living thing, and he could feel  
    Again the pulse that made the Past how real !  
Yet while he sighed before her vacant throne,  
His heart was with our hopes and ours alone,  
    Since only on what *lives* Life sets her seal !

## XXXIV.

Yet while the mind with thoughts of high emprise  
    Moves forward on its destined way, and leaves  
    The childish things behind, what heart but grieves  
To turn from that sweet land which dreaming lies  
With its one loved abode where oft with sighs  
    Was breathed the heartfelt prayer that Heaven  
        receives  
With favour most, while musing Fancy weaves

A halo for each haunt, of brightest dyes !  
Oh, well it were could that sweet peace which reigns  
In those fair scenes be with us on our way  
And that the mind that thinks could also pray  
With something of the fervour that disdains  
All that makes our life soft ; then were our gains  
Not less than theirs who bade us fondly stay ! <sup>1</sup>

## XXXV.

He saw the soul of Ælla stalk like flame  
Along the towers of Bristowe's castle fair,  
And heard his footsteps clanking on the stair,

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<sup>1</sup> The Church of the Middle Ages must always command our respect, and perhaps hardly less, our love. Had Chatterton lived under the *régime* of that Church, he would most likely never have died of starvation in a London garret. He would most likely have risen to some place of eminence in the Church : he would perhaps in due time have become a "purple Abbot" with a seat in Parliament ; he might even have risen high in favour at Court, and have filled the place of Becket and Wolsey. But then, of course, the world would never have had the Rowley poems ! It is remarkable that one of the last observations which Chatterton committed to paper before his death, was to the effect that if any religion was true—poor boy, in that cold Mephistophelian eighteenth century he had fallen into unbelief ; he could hardly avoid doing so, I suppose !—if any religion was true, it was the old religion of the monks. The Church which had succeeded to that of the Middle Ages could offer no career to *him* !

What time from slaughter of his foes he came,  
 To feast in hall with many a stately dame :  
 Might Dacia's hordes to Dacian land repair  
 With ravage of our English homes to share  
 In their beaked ships, unscathed, it was great shame !  
 But Ælla's warlike brand a watchfire blazed <sup>1</sup>  
 To guard our western coasts and keep the soil  
 For those who tilled it with their daily toil,

<sup>1</sup> Ælla is Chatterton's hero *par excellence*. See the "Songe to Ælla," in which the poet, addressing the shade of the warrior, says :

"Thou in black armour stalk'st around  
 Embattled Bristowe, once thy ground,  
 And glowest, arduous, on the castle-steeres."

See also the tragedy of "Ælla," which is Chatterton's longest and most important poem. The skill with which the design of this drama is constructed has not been sufficiently remarked. It is certainly a most wonderful production for a boy of Chatterton's years. In it there occur passages and lyrics of sublime poetry, but it is the skill with which the drama as a whole is constructed, that is perhaps, taking all things into consideration, the most surprising thing about it. Ælla is the governor of Bristol Castle at the time of the Danish invasions. He is just celebrating his marriage feast with the beauteous Saxon maiden, Bertha, when the news comes of the landing of more enemies who are actually at the time laying waste the countryside. Ælla immediately leaves his bride and rushes out to encounter his country's enemies. Celmonde, Ælla's friend and lieutenant, is also in love with Bertha. Only an hour or so since he has been meditating putting poison in the wine of the newly-married couple, because he cannot bear the thought of anyone but himself enjoying the exclusive favour of her whom he has long secretly loved. When Ælla rushes out to meet the Danes, however, another design occurs to his mind. He will return from the fight

Nor where it shone were towns or castles razed  
By the wild bandit Northmen : all amazed  
In haste they fled, and from them flung their  
    spoil !—

## XXXVI.

In sport he played the prelude of the strain,  
For which the years were waiting, listening—pale,  
And hearts were moved like leaves before the gale

---

before Ælla, and pretending that her husband is wounded, persuade Bertha to ride away with him, ostensibly so that he may lead her to the side of her lord in order that she may tend him in his sickness, but in reality with quite another purpose in view. This plan he carries out, and Bertha when too late finds that she is entirely in his power. It is now dark, and Bertha and Celmonde are in a lonely wood. While these events have been taking place, Ælla has met and routed the Danes, some of whom are flying through the wood, when they hear Bertha's screams, and coming to the spot rescue her from Celmonde. The behaviour of the Danes is entirely unexceptionable. In a stiff fight they kill Celmonde, and then, discovering Bertha's rank and condition, determine, most honourably, to escort her back to Bristol and restore her to Ælla. Ælla, however, arrives home before she does, and learning from one of his attendants that his newly-wedded bride has, in his absence, ridden away with a cavalier, he puts the worst construction on her behaviour, and fearing that she is false to him, lays violent hands upon himself. Before he expires Bertha returns, accompanied by her new-found friends, the Danes ; explanations follow, and Ælla has the satisfaction of dying in the knowledge that she whom he loves is true to him ! The whole bad business was due to the baseness of that wretched Celmonde !

That brings in summer heats the freshening rain ;  
Then from his hand he flung the lyre again  
And with mad laughter saw the promise fail,  
Or screeched on scrannel straw the oft-heard  
scale  
That most the Muses hold in deep disdain !  
Yet never sure was one more richly dowered  
With all the gifts that make the song sublime,  
Since Orpheus touched the strings in earliest  
time,  
But in a barren age his genius flowered,  
And Heaven its precious gifts on him that  
showered,  
Gave to none else the mightiest gifts of rhyme !

## XXXVII

How in the air survives each happier tone !—  
It was the soul of music which compels  
The stars upon their courses, and which dwells  
Deep in the rose's heart, the stress unknown  
That moulds her sweet perfection to its own !

It was the strain that on the storm-wind swells  
Round Stennis' haunted stones, placed with what  
    spells !  
Heard by the Druid on the moorland lone !<sup>1</sup>  
Oft from that fearful strain the Druid seer,  
    Has learned dark secrets of impending doom,  
    What time the night was wrapped in tenfold  
    gloom,  
And shrieked aloud his agonizing fear !—  
To that dread spot the flock comes never near ;  
    There never tree shall bud, nor flower shall  
    bloom !

---

<sup>1</sup> Well may the circle of standing stones at Stennis be said to be haunted ! Placed on the open moorland, at a distance of three or four miles from Stromness, in Orkney, it is difficult to conceive what reason on earth these stones could have been set there for except for some purpose of magic and incantation ! It seems an ideal spot for a witch's sabbath, or some such diabolical celebration. The stones are placed in a perfect circle, the diameter of which is perhaps a hundred yards. Some of the stones have fallen and are now lying flat, but many of them are still standing upright. It was a dreary day when the author visited the spot ; the rain was sweeping down from the north-east, but leaving the carriage in which he was driving on the road at some little distance, he made his way to the circle and walked once round it. Seldom had he witnessed more desolate scenery ; there was nothing anywhere to be seen but the bare, treeless hills, the moorland, and in one direction a glimpse of the sea. Not far from the stones is the excavated tumulus which is known as Maes-How.



## xxxviii.

In his young years, methinks a wondrous child  
He wandered in St Mary's hallowed fane,<sup>1</sup>  
And watched the setting sun at evening stain  
The aisles with crimson light, where sweetly smiled  
Full many a windowed saint in beauty mild :—  
Their dear companionship his love to gain  
They gladly gave, and fondly would detain  
Him in their midst with pleasures undefiled !  
There oft he sat by knightly Canyng's tomb  
And conned again old records of the past,  
While monks who in those walls kept Lenten fast  
In years long since, moved round him in the gloom ;  
Their shadowy forms fantastic shapes assume  
While sinks the sun with labouring clouds o'er-  
cast !

## xxxix.

A beauteous youth he was and his dark hair  
Fell like a girl's in silken tresses free :  
His brow, with thought was pale as ivory

---

<sup>1</sup> Chatterton's ancestors had for centuries been employed as sextons at the church of St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol.

And his dark eye flashed with a brightness rare  
As ever filled fond heart with love's despair :—  
See where the book falls idly on his knee—  
He reads the visions of Futurity,  
Hoar secrets to his mind the Past lays bare !<sup>1</sup>  
He sees the frocked and sandalled men, who raise  
The solemn dirge for sainted Henry slain ;  
He hears the maidens of their love complain  
Where Rudborne stream its crimson tide displays ;  
And minstrels chant their old-time roundelays,  
And Freedom shakes her spear upon the plain !—

## XL.

Oh never doubt, with mild and pitying glance  
Our Lady looked upon Her votary :—  
For Her no candles burned, no liturgy

---

<sup>1</sup> We are told that Chatterton not only often sat and read within the church, but that when not so employed, he would, even as a child, lie for hours on the sward outside, gazing upon the beautiful pile which had such a strange fascination for his genius. This occupation seems at times to have thrown him into a species of ecstasy. On one occasion when disturbed at his meditation by a friend, he rose suddenly, and, pointing to the church, said : " There, that is where the lightning struck it ; and that is where the monks acted their miracle plays ! " He had gazed at the building until apparently his imagination had cheated him into the belief that he had actually seen the lightning strike the church, and the mediæval actors performing their quaint drama.

Extolled Her fame, scarce thought on there by  
chance ;  
For all-forgotten was the old romance  
The fond devotion and the chivalry  
That gathered round Her once, and only he  
Perhaps might love Her and Her cause advance !  
And so, one night, she kissed him on the mouth  
And bade him thenceforth dedicate the song  
To Her whose worship there had suffere wrong,  
And charm men's footsteps in the ways of Truth,  
And he should be Her Knight !—What love, what  
ruth,  
Shone in Her looks to make the weak heart  
strong !—

## XLI.

And wealth and honour, friends and peaceful days,  
The laurel crown that Marlowe,<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, wore  
Should all be his, for him were kept in store !—

---

<sup>1</sup> The laurel crown that Marlowe wore, with the bloodstains still wet on the leaves ! What a crown ! It is strange how similar in some respects was the fate of Chatterton to that of Marlowe. The dramatist's father, a shoemaker by trade, was the parish clerk of St Mary's

Ah ! From my soul, turn, turn that stony gaze ;  
Madness and death are in those looks where plays  
No beam of answering warmth ! Fond boy, thy  
lore  
Was given thee but for this ! No more, no more,—

---

Church, Canterbury, while Chatterton's father officiated in a somewhat kindred capacity at the church of St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. Both Marlowe and Chatterton were ruined by their ungoverned passions ; both died before their genius had given more than the promise of what it might ultimately develop into. As far as worldly prosperity is concerned, it was unfortunate for Marlowe, as it was also for Chatterton, that the Church of the Middle Ages was swept away before his time. He missed it only by a very little. Marlowe's father had, most likely, often taken part in the Catholic services which were of course the vogue in all the churches during the reign of Queen Mary, and had no doubt witnessed the splendid state of Cardinal Pole, who was Archbishop of Canterbury in that reign. It is pathetic to think of this poor shoemaker-clerk, the father of the poet, whose "mighty line" would resound throughout the ages, quietly going on with his humble work long after his brilliant son had perished in shame and disgrace, at a distance from the scene of his birth. He had once been so proud of the clever boy whose attainments in the way of reading Latin had attracted the notice of the clergy. He had seen him sent to the University and had hoped perhaps, that he would ultimately obtain a fellowship or something of the kind there. As if those places had anything to give to one whose only merit was that he had in him the faculty to create the English drama and to write verses which will never die ! No, what was wanted there, was the skill to prove that it was not the duty of a physician to heal, because Art has only relation to the finite, and diseases are infinite, and medicine is an art ; consequently physicians ought not to heal diseases ! And that kind of thing ! Of course a *wise* Marlowe, finding himself where that sort of skill was required, or finding himself

His feet shall wander in the devious ways !  
 She looked from Heaven, Our Lady looked and sighed,  
     And the sad sheeted dead lamentings made ;  
     The pillared Saint fell prone ; the walls displayed  
 Drops of huge anguish, and the daylight died  
 Sullenly in the west : men's eyes descried  
     A deeper sadness in the gathering shade !—

## XLII.

And England lost America !<sup>1</sup> The gift  
     That Nature gave, she watched with jealous care,  
     And her own heart was touched with the despair

among the pirouetting dervishes in the desert, would have ceased to think about poetry, and would have made himself master of the art of proving paradoxes satisfactorily, or whirling on one toe, better than those among whom his lot was cast. And in that way he might have become paradox-maker-in-chief to the vice-chancellor, or gold medallist for pirouetting, and have led a happy and respectable life, and closed his days in honour. For the sake of the old shoemaker at Canterbury one wishes that he had done so ! But for the sake of English poetry—No ! That Marlowe had the ability to reach either of the heights here mentioned if he had resolutely set himself to the task, I for one am not inclined to doubt ; but commendable as the art of pirouetting or dervish-waltzing is, on the whole we will not regret too much that he left it to others.

<sup>1</sup> If, as Blake says—

“ The dog starved at his master's gate,  
 Predicts the ruin of the state,”

what must the starvation of such a genius as Chatterton predict ?

That whelmed him in the gloom no hand might  
lift,  
The slowly gathering cloud without a rift  
Which when it passed had left her garden bare  
Of the one delicate bloom that blossomed there,  
And vengeance from her hand came sure and swift !  
Oh, never dream the flower of Genius dies  
Uncared-for by the Power that gives it birth :  
If other mourners fail, yet Heaven and Earth  
Keep watchful guard upon its obsequies,  
And soon the dreadful Furies with wild cries  
Tell to all winds that blow, their own mad  
mirth !—

## XLIII.

“My love though scorned shall save him at the  
last :”—  
Our Lady said, “Here in the hallowed shade  
Of these my walls his body shall be laid ;  
Here shall he rest the strife and anguish past !”—  
Then did She lift her sorrowing lids downcast,  
And looked out for his coming, mild and staid ;—  
At midnight was the lonesome burial made

E

By one old sexton, trembling and aghast !  
 There now he rests within the sacred ground  
     Where oft upon the sunny sward he lay  
     Gazing upon those walls and portals gray,  
 And gazing, food for meditation found !  
 But never more the bell with solemn sound  
     Shall break his dream when folks come there to  
         pray !

. . . . .

## XLIV.

O Lady, my dear Love, whose beauty fills  
     My soul with sweetness, let your odorous hair  
     Fall o'er my brow, and bid my lips not spare  
 For kisses, lest excess of sorrow kills !  
 A precious balm for grief your love instils !  
     Ah me ! such beauty is a thing so rare,  
     Not grief but love now fills me with despair ;

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor Skeat, in his *Life of Thomas Chatterton*, says :—

“ It is said that by the interest of some friends in London, his mother was enabled to have the body conveyed to Bristol, and that Chatterton's uncle, Richard Phillips, the sexton of St Mary's, who had always regarded his nephew with peculiar affection, buried it secretly in Redcliffe Church-yard. The story itself is by no means incredible, and is as well authenticated as many of the received facts of his life.”

At those dear looks how all my spirit thrills !  
And nard and cassia make my soul grow faint  
    With all the languor of the golden South,  
    And Lady, sweet, I dare not kiss your mouth !—  
So fair you are, so free from mortal taint ;  
I only kneel in prayer before my Saint,  
    And drink in from her eyes, perpetual youth !—

## XLV.

Men sometimes die for love, and I would die  
    Right gladly for your favour, nor from pain  
    Would shrink ; but ah, your love in life to gain  
Makes life how sweet ! In love nor pang nor sigh  
But has its rapture, and the heart beats high  
    With happy thoughts and dreams not given in  
    vain ;  
    The swan's white wings cast off the dismal stain  
Of darkness, when at last the morn draws nigh !  
See, Lady, at your feet I make my prayer—  
    Prayer such as holy men to Mary pray !  
    Oh, from my suit turn not your eyes away ;



The strivings of my heart, my love declare !  
You smile—my footsteps climb the golden stair,  
And to your side I win from day to day !—

## XLVI.

How much your beauty is beyond my praise  
Your own heart knows,—Ah, precious heart and  
dear !  
But sweet it is, and makes you seem more near  
To tell you of my worship in these lays ;  
For when I write, remembrance of past days  
Brings back each look you gave to soothe or  
cheer,  
And in my soul your gentle voice I hear,  
Whose music is the law my soul obeys !  
And you with gracious hand accept the song,  
Because you know the love that gives it true ;  
And, when your eyes have glanced the pages  
through,  
Your pity makes amends for what is wrong,  
And pardons every weakness : more than strong  
Your favour makes me ! Love, I love but you !

## XLVII.

There is no beauty in the summer woods  
But what your presence gives them ! In those  
green  
And leafy haunts, your beauteous form unseen  
Oft flits before me, and my search eludes,  
Dear Goddess of the sylvan solitudes !—  
I see you glide the closing boughs between,  
And oft your touch upon my cheek has been,  
But still you fly, where'er my step intrudes !—  
I well remember in the olden times  
How fond you were to baffle all pursuit !  
Strange forms you chose, nor could Apollo's lute  
Win you to stay your flight in Grecian climes  
And hear the whisper of his honied rhymes !  
The Dryads laughed, and all the woods were  
mute !

## XLVIII.

Strange forms you chose ! The laurel tree's disguise  
Oft took your fancy, and still poets twine  
Its leaves around their brows, the sacred sign

Of fame achieved, but you your holy eyes  
Turn from their proffered love, though told with  
sighs

And passionate pleadings, nor to them resign  
That snowy bosom's rapture, for to mine  
Your heart was given, long since, 'neath other  
skies !

And though your presence in the leafy glades  
Oft flits before me when my steps pursue,  
Hid by the closing branches from my view,  
Yet that soft woman's form no more evades,  
Those eyes make known the love that never fades,  
And, Lady, my heart holds the all of you !—

## XLIX.

Ah, blissful thought ! Ah, rapture that entralls !  
O Love, the dear Religion of your name  
Fills the whole world with beauty, and the flame  
Of my devotion every bliss forestalls  
That Heaven can give me ! See the golden walls  
Are round me here, and hark, the glad acclaim  
Of the victorious angels who o'ercame

In the dread fight, upon my rapt ear falls !  
And Michael and the rest uplift their swords  
And point me onward to the promised crown,  
And at your saintly feet I fling me down  
And kiss them, with a love beyond all words,  
Then rise while some to rapture wake the chords,  
And I—I only know your eyes are brown !

. . . . .

L.

Through spreading vales, fair flows the silver Tweed  
Where Neidpath Castle stands by Peebles'  
town ;<sup>1</sup>  
The wooded hills, in circuit rising, frown

---

<sup>1</sup> This, and some of the following Sonnets, were written to commemorate a visit which the writer paid to the most interesting country which lies upon the banks of the Tweed and the Yarrow. Neidpath Castle is an old Border fortress, situated most picturesquely at a bend of the Tweed, about a mile to the west of Peebles. Its wall still shows the breach which was made in it by Cromwell's cannon. The poet Campbell has written a ballad of a sentimental character upon the maiden who "loved and sighed" within its walls, but it cannot, I am afraid, be said that the ballad does anything like justice to his genius, or else—which is a possible alternative—his genius was not well adapted to

Above the smooth expanse of level mead ;  
 The hastening current here its course to speed  
     Delays, and wimpling winds o'er shallows brown,  
     While jocund Nature dons her brightening  
         gown  
 The vernal months in festive dance to lead !  
 Here, in these walls a maiden loved and sighed  
     For one to whom her sire harsh welcome  
         gave,  
     And from her casement watched the waters  
         lave  
 The shingle yonder till she pined and died :  
 And all so sweetly now the waters glide,  
     While scarce a shadow stains the limpid wave !—

the composition of ballad poetry. The story is that the beauteous Helen loved a youth, whom her father, the Earl of March, forbade her to converse with. In consequence of her father's refusal to allow her to see her lover, she became seriously ill, when the Earl, to save her life, relented, and the youth was again admitted to her presence. However, her illness had made such inroads on her beauty that he entirely failed to recognise her. The shock of finding herself, as she supposed, forgotten, was too much for her shattered nerves, and she fell to the ground senseless, not again to revive. It is a pretty enough story, but for pure bathos it would be hard to beat Campbell's lines :—

" But ah ! so pale he knew her not,  
     Though her smile was on him dwelling.  
 ' And am I then forgot—forgot ? '  
     It broke the heart of Helen."

## LI.

Flow on fair Stream ! And ah, what mansion fair <sup>1</sup>  
Is this that comes thy bordering woods among ?  
Once in these halls, his country's lyre unstrung  
The bard to rapture woke, with genius rare,  
And music like enchantment filled the air !  
The living past again had found a tongue,  
And Chivalry its parting splendour flung  
O'er scenes its absence left how cold and bare !—  
Hail, Abbotsford ! Hail consecrated shrine  
To Genius dear ! Thy founder framed the lay  
That showed Religion in her later day  
How brightly once her lamp undimmed could shine,  
And woke Devotion from her sleep supine  
With glimpses of a glory passed away ! <sup>2</sup>—

---

<sup>1</sup> Abbotsford is situated about twenty miles down the Tweed from Peebles.

<sup>2</sup> Scott has indeed given us some beautiful pictures of the religious life of the Middle Ages, and no doubt to him is in a great measure due the revival of interest in Catholicism which was so distinctive a feature of theological thought in the nineteenth century. Chaste as is the ritual, and pure as is the creed of the Anglican Church, some of the more ardent minds of her communion have experienced a sense of something approaching even to coldness in the severe and unadorned simplicity of her teachings. We know, of course, that that very simplicity is one of

## LII.

Among his native hills the minstrel planned  
These towers a refuge for his waning age,  
And here with wizard spells no Archimage

---

her strongest recommendations to the reason, and that her formularies as they at present exist are the ultimate expression of religious truth. Nor will we allow to pass unchallenged Newman's insidious attempt to affix the stigma of worldly-mindedness—a too apparent eagerness to obtain place and preferment—to the character of the Anglican Hierarchy. No, thank Heaven, if it comes to a question of disinterestedness and readiness to sacrifice power and even position for principle, the Church of England can always point proudly to her seven martyr Bishops who were locked up in the Tower for a few days in the reign of James II. Nor need we insist that even a very average share of intelligence must have sufficed to convince them that the feeling of the entire country was with them, and that the cause which they were so boldly championing was indeed bound very soon to triumph. But making all these allowances, it is still not to be denied that to some truly devotional minds, the Mediæval Church, with all its defects, still has a very strong attraction; that at anyrate it appeals to the imagination in a way in which the modern Church does not appeal—not exactly. It is indeed hopeless, perhaps, to argue with minds of this description. If you tell them that the Church is now free from all idolatrous tendencies—that so far from the worship which is due to the Creator being offered to the creature, not only is no *worship* given, but no respect even is paid in it either to the Blessed Virgin or to the saints—they will, as like as not, answer that to them and to you the word Religion has a different signification. The writer acknowledges that great as is his own private respect for the Anglican Hierarchy—high as they have confessedly always deserved to stand in the eyes of the world, both on account of their blameless lives and of the courteous affability of their manners—the older line of pre-

But he could wield, the gulf of Time he spanned,  
And culled strange flowers from many a distant  
land :

In sober sooth he was a wizard sage,  
As ever bade ethereal conflicts rage

---

lates that preceded them is, to *his* mind, invested with some attributes of dignity and grandeur which are not always so easily to be detected in their successors. One sometimes thinks even with feelings amounting almost to respect of the old "caged wolf" Bonner. Cruel Bonner undoubtedly was ; he may have been licentious, though the charge rests on slight evidence. But he was not selfish ; he was, on the contrary, capable of highly disinterested conduct. He had suffered a long period of imprisonment before the accession of Queen Mary brought him into prominence and gave him the opportunity to persecute. The blame for the burnings at Smithfield and in other parts of the country rests chiefly with him and Cardinal Pole, but it must be remembered that both of these men persecuted, not for any private advantage or gratification which the sufferings of others could give them, but for the good of what they believed, mistakenly no doubt, to be the most sacred institution existing under Heaven. And when Mary died Bonner gave up his palace and his luxurious fare, and went to the Tower without a murmur. There he stayed in squalor and misery until his death, which took place nine or ten years later, when a single word would have restored him to eminence and splendour. Think of him there, "caged wolf" as he was, with his coarse gown around him, living in hourly expectation of being brought out to a terrible and ignominious death, yet with a grim hope deep down in his heart that the knife of the assassin, or failing that the small-pox, might carry off Queen Elizabeth some fine day, and bring in again a golden age of Mary Stuart and the Catholics. Might he only once more get his fangs at the throats of his enemies ! Might they only give him one more chance ! For us sitting here by our firesides, and not in a dismal room in the Tower, with the prospect of death and torture



O'er Eildon's Heights, where sleeps King Arthur's  
band !

And not alone the elements obeyed

With fear, the strong compulsion of his lore,

And roofed the sky with clouds from shore to  
shore,

But spirits in the air encounters made

With flash of lance, and glint of fiery blade,

To work his will, and at his hest forbore !

LIII.

Here, round him moved of guests exalted throng

As ever earthly host might entertain ;

The peers and paladins of France and Spain

And doughty chiefs long famed in Border song,

And ladies bright who moved them fair among,

With looks like her's whose looks are all my  
pain :—

Ah ! not like her's, fond thought how weak and  
vain,

---

before us, it is impossible to approve or in any way to appreciate his sentiments. But when the worst is said of him that can be said, there was some sound British stuff in the manhood of Bishop Bonner.

That does my Lady's beauty too much wrong !—  
And here alas ! were queens who erst bemoaned  
    Ungentle treatment at their lieges' hands,  
    And, exiled, wandered far in foreign lands  
Where few the rule of sovereign pity owned !  
Here now they sat in state, no more dethroned,  
    And smiled in willing eyes their sweet commands !

## LIV.

And here were cavaliers who thought to stay  
    An empire's onward march with stubborn zeal :—  
    On Marston Moor their scattered squadrons reel,  
In Naseby Fight, and many another fray,  
Till all forespent, on Worcester's crowning day,  
    They sank at last beneath the conquering  
        steel :—  
    The troubles of the time they thought to heal  
And save the limbs that best were lopt away !—  
How gallantly they fought, his page can tell  
    That o'er them sheds its halo of Romance,  
And still the eye may view with pitying  
    glance

Where Reason holds the balance passing well,  
Or yields reluctant homage to the spell !—  
They did with Death, a featly galliard dance !

## LV.

But ah, how sweet those portraits of the fair,  
With which he loved his pages to adorn !  
To what ethereal heights his Muse, upborne,  
Oft winged her flight above the middle air  
When beauty was his theme, let them declare  
Whose hearts have felt that freshness of the morn,  
And loved its balmy breathings !—From the thorn  
Go pluck the rose, and place it in your hair !  
Then read again the tale so sweetly told  
Of her, the bonny Bride of Avenal,  
Whose beauteous looks her lover's heart in thrall  
Held, while the lingering months in severance  
rolled,  
Till to a thread was worn the narrowing gold  
That showed her house was tottering to its fall !<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See *The Monastery*.

## LVI.

The gentle Douglas, when with many a wound  
He stricken fell, and knew the hour his last,<sup>1</sup>  
Saw, with what thronging memories of the past,

---

<sup>1</sup> See Sir Walter Scott's *Abbot*. The account which Scott gives of the death of George Douglas at the battle of Langside, as described in the Sonnet, is of course entirely imaginary; but the episode is so romantic and beautiful, no excuse need be offered for making it the subject of a few lines of verse. The whole story of the escape of Mary Stuart from Loch Leven, of her effort to frustrate her enemies at Langside, and of her subsequent flight into England, reads more like the chapters of a romance than the sober narration of history. On the island of Loch Leven the queen was confined in a narrow tower standing at a corner of the castle quadrangle; in it there were three small apartments, one above the other, access to the upper apartments being only possible by means of ladders placed at openings in the floors. Life in such a place must indeed have been terrible for a high-born and delicate lady. She had made various attempts to escape. On one occasion she had disguised herself as a laundry-woman, had succeeded in passing the guard, and was indeed some way across the lake in the boat which was going to the mainland, when one of the soldiers who was rowing, pulling her hood aside playfully so as to see the face of the supposed laundry-woman, discovered who their fair passenger really was. The Queen had been confined eleven months in Loch Leven when George Douglas, a son of the lady of the castle, succeeded in effecting her deliverance. He had fallen in love with his mother's beautiful captive, and it is said that she had encouraged his infatuation. Taking into his confidence a little foundling page, to whom the name of William Douglas had been given by his patrons, he laid his plans with much skill. The keys of the tower in which Mary Stuart was confined were brought every evening with the other keys of the castle into the hall and given to the lord of the castle, Sir William Douglas, George Douglas's elder brother, often

The beauteous Queen by that day's work uncrowned,  
Kneel, bending o'er him, on the sodden ground,  
And read in eyes from which the tears fell fast,  
The love that like Heaven's benediction cast

---

while he sat at table. On a certain May evening, when the light was fading, the keys were as usual brought, and placed at his elbow on the board. Instantly the page saw his opportunity. Covering the keys with a plate he swept them noiselessly from the table. Two hours later Mary Stuart, with George Douglas and some cavaliers who had been posted with horses in readiness on the mainland, was galloping wildly away to join her friends the Hamiltons. At the battle of Langside, which took place not quite a fortnight later, the forces which had rallied to her standard were irretrievably defeated by the Regent Murray. Sir Walter Scott, in that wonderful book *The Abbot*, represents Queen Mary as watching the battle from the mound on which stands Crookstone Castle, but this, I think, is not quite correct. There is certainly a dramatic propriety in placing her there to watch the battle, since it seems that she had spent a few days of the first weeks of her married life with Darnley in Crookstone Castle. Sir Walter Scott also represents George Douglas as being mortally wounded in the battle, and Mary Stuart as kneeling beside him, and allowing him to read in her looks the love which she bore to him, before he died. This is pure fiction. George Douglas was not killed at Langside, but was one of the Queen's companions in her mad ninety miles' gallop to the Solway. In the course of her flight from the battlefield, before she reached the castle of Lord Herries, it is said that Queen Mary slept for two nights on the bare ground. Crookstone Castle, near to which at anyrate the battle of Langside was fought, is now a dilapidated ruin with no features of particular interest to attract the tourist. The scenery in its immediate neighbourhood is, however, rather picturesque, and the writer has sometimes found a melancholy pleasure in climbing its dismantled tower, and

Its hallowing light upon the gloom profound !  
To him, 'twas given to learn in that last hour,  
How fortune oft, her dearest gifts concedes  
Not in our times of sunshine, but when bleeds  
The heart o'er its hopes vanquished, and when  
lower  
Darkest, the clouds around us!—Love's one  
flower—  
What though Death gives it! 'Tis the flower  
one heeds!—

. . . . .

## LVII.

See where of old True Thomas heard the sound  
Of tinkling bells upon the summer wind  
And looked in eyes that made his own eyes  
blind  
With too much beauty! On this grassy mound

---

calling to mind the strange events of her career, with whose fortunes it was to some extent connected. After being Queen of France and Scotland, Mary Stuart was a prisoner in England before she had reached the age of twenty-six.

F

She 'lighted from her palfrey to the ground  
 For love of him though but of mortal kind,  
 Who was herself immortal ! <sup>1</sup> Love can find  
 No solace but in love, and ne'er has found !  
 She was the Queen of Fairies, and by night  
 She somehow felt the moonbeams had grown  
 pale :—  
 There was a sadness in the sighing gale  
 That now no more could soothe her with delight,  
 And ah, she longed to feast her aching sight  
 On one whose love, though mortal, would not fail !

---

<sup>1</sup> The loves of Thomas the Rhymer (otherwise Thomas of Erceldoune) and the Queen of Fairyland, form the subject of one of the most beautiful of the old ballads. It was a subject that appealed strongly to the imagination of Scott, who himself composed a ballad in continuation of the old one. There is an element of mystery, a suggestiveness in the details of the story as it is related in the ancient version, that leaves a lasting impression on the mind of the reader. The spot is shown not far from Abbotsford where the Faery Queen appeared to her mortal lover.

" True Thomas lay on Huntlie bank :  
 A ferlie he spied wi' his e'e ;  
 And there he saw a lady bright  
 Come riding down by the Eildon tree.

Her skirt was o' the grass-green silk,  
 Her mantle of the velvet fyne ;  
 At ilka tett of her horse's mane  
 Hang fifty siller bells and nine," etc.

## LVIII.

Who loves not Yarrow!<sup>1</sup> Where through hills  
up-piled,  
And woods low creeping to the water's brim,  
Her crystal current glides by gardens trim,  
Or wilderness of rocks confused and wild!  
Ah, never sure the sun in splendour smiled  
On scene more fair, what time he rests his rim  
On yonder cloudy heights whose outlines dim

---

<sup>1</sup> A first view of the Yarrow is well calculated to make an impression on the mind of the student of Border poetry. The writer will not soon forget the sensations which he experienced upon the occasion of his first and only visit to the famous stream. Passing over the hills from Innerleithen he struck the Yarrow valley at the spot where Sir Walter Scott for the last time met the poet Hogg. Before him in the afternoon light of a somewhat cloudy day lay the historic stream winding darkly among the lawny slopes and broken patches of woodland through which it flows to Selkirk. Far down on the left was the little hamlet of Yarrow, so rich in poetic associations, and on all sides the prospect was hemmed in by steep and rugged hills. The road runs parallel with the stream the whole length of its course to Selkirk, which is about twelve miles distant, and few journeys of equal length have so many attractions to offer to the visitor, either in the way of beautiful and varied scenery, or in the deeper interest which is excited by the proximity of spots which in past ages were the scenes of the touching and mournful occurrences with which our imagination has long been familiar in the writings of the poet and the historian.



Have little in their form of soft or mild !  
Still winding as it flows, a mournful song  
    The water sings of old forgotten woes,  
    And even in the sunlight darkling flows  
As if to keep the memory green of wrong  
And feuds yet unavenged, whose griefs prolong  
    Themselves in almost every wind that blows !

## LIX.

Here, not in quarrel just but fighting slain,  
    Seven champions did the soil with blood im-  
        brue :—<sup>1</sup>  
    Down from their steeds they leapt, their swords  
        they drew  
And on their watchful foeman rushed amain ;

---

<sup>1</sup> On the hillside in one of the wild glens that lie between Yarrow and Tweed, a number of blackened stones are still to be seen which are locally supposed to mark the spot where the events took place which are recorded in the fine old ballad entitled "The Douglas Tragedy." According to the account given in the ballad, it seems that a lady, most likely a member of the Douglas family, flying with her lover, who is spoken of in the poem as Lord William, was pursued by her father and her seven brothers, who overtook the fugitive couple at the spot indicated. A fight ensued between Lord William and the lady's kinsmen, with the

But soon, I wis, their hearts for flight were fain,  
Whose thought but now was faster to pursue,  
While waiting here, the conflict full in view,  
Their sister held that foeman's bridle-rein !  
Seven champions bold, the offspring of one sire,  
Fell to one trusty blade and kissed the ground,  
And soon that sire himself his rest had found  
Upon the blood-stained sod ; but now the fire  
Wanes in that chieftain's heart, where lives no ire  
The daughter with the father's harm to wound !

## LX.

Now, here are spreading vales with culture green,  
● And here is level sand and lone morass  
Where sleeps the dark-brown stream like smoothest  
grass,  
Or foaming pours wide shelving banks between.—

---

result that her seven brothers were slain, while her father only avoided a similar fate owing to his daughter's entreaties. The poem states that the lady held her lover's bridle-rein while the conflict took place. An unhappy ending is given to the story in the ballad, where it is represented that Lord William, although victorious against such great odds in the fight, received a wound which afterwards proved to be mortal. Together with his bride, he reached his mother's hall, but, overcome with loss of blood and fatigue, he died in the course of the following night.

Where yonder mossy stones are mouldering seen,  
Lo how that broken arch its tottering mass  
Lifts half-way o'er the flood, o'ergrown with grass  
And weeds, the centre of the fair demesne !  
Perchance by this old bridge, that fatal morn  
He rode, the gallant youth <sup>1</sup> who came to keep  
His tryst here on these holms. The woolly sheep  
Are pastured on the lowland now ; the thorn  
Buds in the hedgerow, and the bladed corn  
Peeps from the soil.—Time holds our woes but  
cheap !

## LXI.

His rival here to meet and, blade to blade,  
His claim make good to one most beauteous hand,  
He rode at dawn, but soon an arméd band  
Who watched his coming, found in yonder glade,

---

<sup>1</sup> The gallant youth, to whom reference is made, is the hero of the well-known and beautiful ballad, "The Dowie Dens of Yarrow," and also of Hamilton's exquisite poem, beginning "Busk ye, busk ye, my bonnie, bonnie bride !" As regards the latter, there are few poems in the Scottish dialect which can be compared with it for beauty and melody of versification, or for the peculiar note of haunting sadness which pervades it. It is pre-eminently the Song of Yarrow.

And knew, but not till then, he was betrayed :<sup>1</sup>  
Here, on this knoll, with solitary brand,  
Their onslaught he sustained, and did withstand  
Till five upon the soil were lifeless laid !<sup>2</sup>  
The horizontal sun looked through the mist  
Of the still Autumn morning, on the play  
Of the swift-darting swords' points : gaunt and grey  
Seemed his assailants while with well-trained wrist  
Their thrusts he parried still—Not to desist,  
To vanquish was his thought in that wild fray !

## LXII.

The brother of his bride behind him came  
With treacherous lance, and thrust his body  
through :  
Woe worth the day, and Yarrow long shall rue,

---

<sup>1</sup> The old ballad, the "Dowie Dens," which version I have followed in these lines, says :—

"As he gaed up the Tennie's bank,  
I wot he gaed wi' sorrow,  
Till down in a den, he spied nine armed men,  
On the dowie houns of Yarrow."

There are some few discrepancies as regards the details of this bad business, which still need reconciling, for there seems to have been more accounts than one of the affair, and they do not in all points tally.

<sup>2</sup> "Four has he hurt, and five has slain."

Though now survives no memory of his name !  
For ah, though young he was the Child of Fame,  
And still shall live although his years were few !  
How gallantly his life for gage he threw  
To men whose lives were staked upon the game !  
Of other deeds than his no whit less bold  
We oft may read, but wanting is the charm  
That only song can give : the heart beats warm  
But yet our souls are stirred not, and once told  
The tale fades from our thought : song is the gold  
That Time corrodes not and no changes harm !

## LXIII.

But see who kneels beside him ! On her hair  
The lingering beam that brightens from the  
West,  
Dwells for an instant, and her lips are prest  
To those cold lips that never more love's prayer  
Shall whisper, or with words of feigned despair  
Sue for the favour which her looks confest  
Even while her lips denied ; and breast to breast  
The passion of her love is all laid bare !

It is his bride, for whose dear sake he fought,  
For whom he died, whose heart was his alone :—  
That morn her cheek was cold as is the stone  
Where now she leans, when one last kiss he  
sought.  
He told her then, her fears were foolish—naught ;  
And now—from his pale lips there breaks no  
moan.

. . . . .

## LXIV.

Lo, where his Border Lay the minstrel sung  
In Newark's halls to many a listening dame,<sup>1</sup>  
And told of Melrose and the wondrous flame  
That from the opened vault its radiance flung

---

<sup>1</sup> It is within the walls of Newark Castle, on the right bank of the Yarrow, that Scott has placed the opening scene of the earliest, and in some respects, the most pleasing of his metrical romances. It was to the hospitable doors of this castle that the "wandering harper, scorned and poor," came with the request that he might be permitted to recite to the noble lady who dwelt there, and her maidens, his story of knightly adventure and "gramarye." The request was granted, and addressing his song to the Duchess of Buccleuch, the same who "had wept o'er Monmouth's bloody tomb," he told the tale which is embodied in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

When back for fear the bold moss-trooper sprung,<sup>1</sup>  
And Michael Scott lay stark, of wizard fame ;—  
And how next day to Branksome Hall he came  
And told what scarce was told with living tongue !—  
Ah, stately Melrose now a ruin stands,  
Its columned fane left open to the skies,  
And Newark's roofless halls by Yarrow rise  
No more to be rebuilt by mortal hands,—  
Where barons feasted once their warrior bands  
And gallants looked for love in ladies' eyes !—

. . . . .

## LXV.

O Lady, you for whom I write these lays,  
Recounting stories that were better sung  
In those old moving strains, whose notes are flung  
Like music which the summer wind conveys  
From some wild glen, the haunt in other days  
Of those whose loves and sorrows now my tongue  
Awakes in passing, while the lyre unstrung  
Of Border song to strike my hand essays !

---

<sup>1</sup> Sir William of Deloraine. See the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

If now too long the Muse her flight detains  
With themes that keep her from your beauteous  
eyes,  
And lingering o'er each lover's mournful sighs,  
Is found forgetful of those nearer pains  
Which rankle in her heart ; the golden chains  
Full soon clank round her ; see, she homeward  
flies !—

## LXVI.

Oh, hard it were, I know, to sing aright  
The praises of your beauty and your grace,  
But when I kneel in prayer I see your face,  
And only in your presence feel delight.—  
Be mine to dwell, for ever, in your sight,  
And still new beauties in your looks to trace,  
Till from my soul those beams at last displace  
Whatever than themselves is found less bright !  
And be it mine, in every story told  
By poet's pen, those beauteous looks to see,  
And hear your voice in every melody



The winds in summer from their wings unfold,  
Till in my hand your beauteous hand I hold,  
And from those precious lips obtain love's fee !—

## LXVII.

I rode an hour, by Yarrow's wimpling stream,  
And called to mind full many a moving tale,  
While round me whispering sighed the tuneful  
gale,  
And on the waters flashed the quivering beam,  
And all the past was as a mournful dream  
Where only still your beauty did not fail  
To bring me happy thoughts, in every vale  
A light beyond the sunlight's brightest gleam !  
For with me still I felt your beauty near,  
And evermore before mine eyes you stood  
The centre of each haunted solitude ;  
And those old songs but made you seem more  
dear,  
For in their strains I seemed your voice to hear,  
And still through many a change your form  
pursued !—

## LXVIII.

And when the seven with rurious onset came,<sup>1</sup>  
And lifted blades, against the fearless knight  
Who checked in yonder vale his headlong flight,  
And stopt, not loath, their zeal at last to tame,

---

<sup>1</sup> We are now back again with the hero of the "Douglas Tragedy," a gentleman who is computed to have flourished about two centuries previous to his more distinguished compatriot, the illustrious but nameless youth, whose tragic fate haunts, and will for ever haunt, the banks of the Yarrow. As to the identity of the latter, indeed, conjecture has not been wanting, although antiquarian research has not hitherto been able to solve the problem. Sir Walter Scott, with much boldness, ventured the assertion that he was some kinsman of his own family, and considering the locality, it would not be at all surprising if his name should actually turn out to have been Scott. Sir Walter, too, was mainly responsible for the statement that the blackened stones, which are still to be seen standing to the west of Yarrow Kirk, mark the exact spot where he fell. "Any child who drives a cow," said the Bard, with asperity, "any child who drives a cow can tell you that the stones mark the place where the two lords were slain in single combat!" But as far as this goes, to the merely average reader, it only seems to complicate matters, for the old ballad says nothing about any single combat—except, indeed, that there *was to have been* a single combat which did not come off,—but about a fight in which one, a gallant youth, was contending for his life against half a score of assassins. It may perhaps be laid down with some certainty that the fight, in which he was the central figure, took place towards the close of the sixteenth century; while the runaway love match of Lord William and the Lady Margaret, which forms the subject of the "Douglas Tragedy," was an

I looked and almost breathed aloud your name,  
For it was you who stood to watch the fight,  
And, ah ! methinks, it was your beauty bright  
That filled his heart with that consuming flame !  
Your hand upon the bridle, there you stood,  
Where now those ancient stones attest the place,  
And Oh ! your look was proud, though pale your  
face,  
While still your eye the falchion's flash pursued  
Not shrinking, though the soil with blood imbrued,  
Of that day's work bore many a fearful trace !

## LXIX.

And it was you who kept my heart in thrall  
For ever from that time, and long before ;  
And what at first to mention I forbore,  
The tragic ending that must needs befall

---

affair of the fourteenth century. The delicate rebuke administered by the noble lord to his lady's objectionable relations—the neat, and in every sense of the word, gentlemanly manner in which he laid them out, the whole seven of them, one after another, at his sword's point, on the barren hillside—should certainly secure him the respect of all who admire efficiency in whatever form it is displayed.

In that old rhyme, is only fiction all :  
And tender-hearted lovers who deplore  
Those lovers' hapless fates, may keep in store  
Their tears henceforth, for woes beyond recall !  
For when we stopped beneath the rising moon,  
And down I stooped beside the mountain  
rill<sup>1</sup>  
To quench my thirst, my heart was beating  
still  
Beneath my purple vest as blithe a tune  
As when that morn I kissed your lips ere  
noon ;  
And, oh, right gladly there I drank my fill.

---

<sup>1</sup> Or, as the old poet says, with apparently needless iteration,

“ Oh, they rade on, and on they rade,  
And a' by the light of the moon,  
Until they came to yon wan water,  
And there they 'lighted down.

They 'lighted down to tak' a drink  
Of the spring that ran so clear,”

The poet, too, proceeds to add, erroneously as it must appear in the light of the more recent information which is obtainable from Sonnet LXX.,

“ And down the stream ran his good heart's blood,  
And sair she 'gan to fear.”

## LXX.

And as I told you then, it was my cloak,<sup>1</sup>  
The scarlet cloak which well you know I  
wore,  
That made the stream look red; and I was  
more  
In need of rest than bandage, for no stroke  
That flashed but left me scatheless, and I broke  
Of heads, I know, what seemed at least a  
score,  
And fighting though it warms, yet leaves you  
sore;  
And lightly no sane man would seven provoke!  
And when that night we reached my mother's  
hall,  
We did not die, as that old rhymer tells  
Perversely (though the tragic sense impels

---

<sup>1</sup> "Hold up, hold up, Lord William," she says,

"For I fear that you are slain!"

"'Tis naething but the shadow of my scarlet cloak  
That shines in the water sae plain."

It is clear now that he was telling the truth after all.

No doubt, to drape the scene in sable pall),  
But lived for many a year to laugh at all

Such tales, in sound of sweet Saint Mary's  
bells !<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Saint Mary's Church on the shore of Saint Mary's Loch.

To show the malicious circumstantiality with which the old rhyming fabricator, who tries to represent himself as a contemporary of the events which he is describing, or inventing, endeavours to give an air of verisimilitude to his narrative, read the concluding verses of the ballad :—

“ Lord William was buried in Saint Marie's kirk  
Lady Margaret in Marie's quire ;  
Out o' the lady's grave, grew a bonnie red rose,  
And out o' the knight's a brier.

And they twa met, and they twa plat,  
And fain they wad be near ;  
And a' the warld might ken right weel  
They were twa lovers dear.

But by, and rade the Black Douglas,  
And wow but he was rough :  
For he pulled up the bonnie brier  
And flang it in St Marie's Loch.”

Will anyone seriously pretend that the late lamented Black Douglas, Esquire,—a gentleman so highly esteemed not only in his own neighbourhood, but throughout all that part of Scotland ; an honest, broad-cloth-coated, law-abiding, church-going citizen—that *he*, above all people, was guilty of such behaviour ! I would not believe it on the word of his neighbour, the Abbot of Melrose, to say nothing of a nameless and insignificant scribbler, whose writings are unfortunately remembered when those of better people are forgotten.

G

## LXXI.

Great Bard of Athens ! Master of the strain <sup>1</sup>  
That shook the stage, in those old days long past,  
Ere Freedom, loath to leave, yet looked her last  
On that dear land, she loved, and not in vain ;  
Of those few scattered beams, which now remain  
Of all thy sun's meridian splendour cast,  
Be mine to feel the warmth, not fading fast,  
And from those beams, new power and truth to gain !  
How oft the poets of succeeding years,  
Have with their puny tapers mocked the day  
That gave them birth and saw them pass away !

---

<sup>1</sup> The writings of Sophocles, are in point of form the most perfect productions of dramatic composition the world has ever witnessed. Except in the case of Shakespeare, and perhaps of Goethe, Sophocles has no competitor in vivid depiction of character, or in the grace and sweetness with which he sets before our eyes the living realities of womanly love and tenderness, in the types of female excellence which he has chosen for representation. On such a subject, it is, of course, difficult to say anything which has not already been said hundreds of times, and it is with extreme diffidence that the writer ventures now to publish this and the remaining Sonnets of the volume, which all have relation to the same topic. The verses have been thrown into the form of an address to the poet for the sake of dramatic effect. I may add that of the ninety odd plays which Sophocles is said to have written, only seven are now extant.

Thy voice is as the music of the spheres  
And hardly less enduring, and our tears  
And smiles bear witness to thy lasting sway !

## LXXII.

Thine was the skill that told in aptest phrase,  
The fairest dreams that haunt and leave the  
soul,  
And all the human heart conceives of dole  
And fiery passion, still thy verse displays :—  
To reach thy flight, the mind in vain essays,  
Though still borne onward with a swift control  
Thy verse too strongly lifts us, and the goal  
We hoped to gain, seems brightening in our  
gaze !  
A moment and the end is all so near ;  
The secret word that slept upon thy tongue,  
Seems all but spoken, and the region flung  
Wide to our steps, where thou wast wont to  
hear  
Songs not of earth ; in golden light appear  
Heights more divine than ever yet were sung !



## LXXIII.

But, who shall praise that wonder of thy style  
Which could so well each loftiest type portray :—  
Electra watchful still from day to day,<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Electra is the classical Cinderella. Nothing can exceed the grace and delicacy with which Sophocles has drawn the character of this heroine. The daughter of Agamemnon, she was only a child when her mother, the infamous Clytemnestra, murdered her husband, Electra's father, in order to indulge her guilty love for Ægisthus. Electra saved the life of her brother Orestes, by conveying him secretly from her mother's presence, and sending him to be educated at the court of a neighbouring prince. The drama represents the miserable life Electra led, while her mother and Ægisthus reigned undisturbed at Mycenæ. She was treated as the veriest menial, dressed in the coarsest dresses, and forced to wait at table among her father's servants, receiving only harsh words, and sometimes blows from her mother and her mother's paramour. However, she bore up bravely in the face of this trouble, and refused to acknowledge in Ægisthus anything but the foul and murderous dastard which he was. At length the news came that Orestes, on whom all her hopes were placed, had been killed in a chariot race, and for a moment the blow overwhelmed her. Clytemnestra, on the other hand, had just been pouring libations and praying to her gods for deliverance from the fear which continually haunted her guilty conscience, that Orestes would some day return to avenge his father's murder. It was while affairs were in this position that Orestes, who was not, of course, really killed, but who had himself, in order to further his purpose, caused the rumour of his death to be brought to Mycenæ, returned to his father's palace. He was not long in making himself known to Electra, and before many hours were past the earth had ceased to be cumbered with Ægisthus and the false wife of Agamemnon.

And patient of how many a wrong the while !  
Who on the proud usurper would not smile,  
    But bore from murderous hands her hope away,  
    The young Orestes, destined soon to play  
The part that did his hands with blood defile !  
How still she turned to each reviling word  
    Her ear unflinching, and with high rebuke  
    Bore witness to the past, while in her look  
Flashed the resentment which was as a sword  
To the unfaithful wife, and her new lord,  
    Who quailed beneath the taunts they ill could  
    brook !

## LXXIV.

How, when the tidings came that filled with joy  
    The guilty pair, her heart o'erwhelmed with woe,  
    She reeled and well-nigh sank beneath the blow,  
Soon, soon, to feel a bliss without alloy  
When to her arms returned the wayward boy  
    For whose dear sight her heart was aching so,  
    And hardly of his presence could forego  
The comfort, that he might their foes destroy !

How to the women of the neighbouring town  
She called aloud her joy, and bade them see  
Who was returned at last to set them free  
From further fear of that fell tyrant's frown,  
And from the stain, for which her tears ran down  
All through the livelong night so piteously !

## LXXV.

The guilty mother with her offerings came  
And prayed that Heaven her foulness would  
condone !  
And poured unblest libations on the stone  
That was the witness of her lifelong shame,  
And soon the tidings heard with glad acclaim  
That lifted from her heart what scarce to own  
She dared, the fear that made her most alone  
When those were near who least the past could  
blame !  
But Heaven that only mocks us when we seem  
To prosper most in evil, and for good  
Gives us our bane, poured on her heart a flood

Of foul rejoicing, till she caught the gleam  
Of the bright steel, and raised aloft the scream  
That was the signal of her altered mood !

## LXXVI.

And how when Ajax, from his father's hall,  
Sailed forth with those who sought the Trojan  
shore,<sup>1</sup>

He recked not of the fate the gods in store  
Kept for him there, nor for their aid would call,  
While on his head the blow, not slow to fall,

Delayed, still trusting only as of yore  
In his own arm, full soon not less but more  
To feel what might the boldest heart appal !

---

<sup>1</sup> The story of Ajax is well known to most readers, his madness and the consequent attack which he perpetrated on the cattle of the Greek host at Troy (mistaking them in his hallucination for armed warriors, and his own mortal enemies) having become proverbial. The poet represents Ajax as excessively brave, but trusting only in his own strength, and, from his youth up, entirely regardless of religion. It was on account of his irreligion that Athene perplexed him with madness, and brought about his destruction by causing him to make his ridiculous onslaught on the cattle.

And it grew clear to him that Heaven, though  
spurned,  
Leaves not itself unwitnessed, but lays prone  
The stubborn will that would its power disown,  
And bends the knees of brass, and plain-discerned  
Its texts writes in men's eyes—how deeply burned  
In hearts that were to milder teaching stone !

## LXXVII.

Oh, then in what tremendous lines he poured  
The anguish of his grief, when from his brain  
The madness passed, and daylight showed how  
plain  
The signs of that night's ravage, work abhorred  
That stained, but with how foul a stain, the  
sword  
That else had brought some respite for his  
pain,  
And those against whose wrath his rage was  
vain  
Passed round from lip to lip, the biting word !

Yet was his heart still great in that defeat,  
And never when the foemen backward rolled  
Before his arm, was danger more controlled  
By the proud soul within him ! But to greet  
His comrades' altered looks, and, ah, to meet  
Again the friends whom most he loved of old !

## LXXVIII.

Of *Œdipus* the dark mysterious tale  
For fittest theme thy verse in manhood chose,<sup>1</sup>  
Till whelmed at last in unimagined woes

---

<sup>1</sup> The masterpiece of Sophocles is the *Œdipus*. It is allowed by most critics that the development of the plot of this drama is about as perfect as anything which is the work of merely human art can be. Coleridge classified the plot of this play, with the plots of *Othello* and Fielding's *Tom Jones*, as the most perfectly constructed which were ever unfolded in poetry or fiction. There is a great element of mystery in the story. Before the birth of *Œdipus* the Oracle had predicted that he would one day slay his father. Consequently, when he was still only a few days old he was cast out to die in the mountains, and, sure enough, he would have died there, but for the timely intervention of some shepherds, who found him and conveyed him to Corinth, entrusting him there to a kind-hearted old gentleman named Polybus, who, having no children of his own, adopted him, and consented to bring him up as his own son. When he reached man's estate the Oracle very considerably

The bark was lost, that bore so proud a sail !  
And Reason though long tried, was found to  
fail

When matched with that deep insight which  
bestows

Its guidance oftenest most where men suppose

---

repeated his former message, and sent word to say that Œdipus would one day kill his own father. In order to avoid doing this, Œdipus, who had not the faintest suspicion of the true state of affairs, and who thought that kind old Polybus was indeed his father, made up his mind to leave Corinth. It pained him to the heart to think of hurting the old gentleman. Taking the high road for Thebes, he unfortunately fell in with a person who was travelling in the opposite direction, a fussy and choleric old character, who was journeying in much state, with a chariot and mules and footmen. A dispute happening to arise between them regarding some question as to the right-of-way, Œdipus battered in the heads of one or two of the attendants, and then despatched the old plutocrat. Afterwards continuing his journey to Thebes, he made the acquaintance of the widow of the murdered man, and, winning her affection, took up the reins of government which had fallen from the hands of her husband, and himself became King of Thebes, only to find in the end that Laius, whom he had left a corpse by the roadside, was in reality his own father, and that Jocasta, whom he had married, was his mother ! The way in which he makes this terrible discovery at last is by means of the revelations of the inspired seer, Teiresias, who discloses to him the true state of affairs, only after he has been cruelly taunted by Œdipus with being an impostor. The scenes in which the two confront each other—Teiresias, blind and poor, but trusting in his knowledge of future events ; Œdipus, angry and sceptical, relying upon his material power and on his matured understanding that has brought him through so many difficulties to eminence and splendour—are of paramount and unflinching

The sense of common things can most avail !  
 The seer, with insight gifted, could discern  
     The forms of things yet formless, and behold  
     The Past and Future in one blaze outrolled  
 Of light before him, whence he knew to learn  
 The issues of things present—quick to spurn  
     The taunts of angry lips though blind and  
     old !

## LXXIX.

Then with what force thou didst the strife disclose  
     Of mind that only on itself relies,  
     With that dark power that rolls its lampless  
         eyes  
 In quest of that more blinding light which  
     flows

---

interest. Indeed, these two characters may in a sense be said to typify two entirely different states of conscious being : Œdipus representing the trained and scientific intellect—the understanding—while Teiresias is the representative of spiritual insight and trust in a Power higher than man.

*πέφευγα· τάληθές γὰρ ισχύον τρέφω.*

is the prophet's magnificent boast.



From sources never-failing, that dispose  
The mind for its reception, while thought  
vies  
Vainly with thought, in strivings to devise  
Means which to its advance it can oppose !  
Till foiled and worsted soon with sceptic sneer  
It arms its efforts, and the power gainsays  
That breaks and lays it prostrate, or allays  
With blind denials its encroaching fear,  
Speaking with menace proud, even when most  
near  
The widening gulf its gaping maw displays.

LXXX.

For there we see the more-than-mortal placed  
In opposition with the mind that draws  
Its force from its own workings, and the laws  
That guide those workings only ; not debased  
From its own primal soundness, nor ungraced  
With that deep sense of beauty, which, from  
cause  
To cause the long chain tracing, finds no pause

Of moral fitness, blankness interspaced ;  
But from the understanding in its prime  
Takes its full strength, and nothing knows but  
what  
The understanding gives it ; sees no jot  
Beyond those limits, and almost as crime  
Counts the perception that to heights would  
climb  
Outside the settled bounds its claims allot !

## LXXXI.

And with what happy art the well-told tale  
Moves onward slowly to that hour of doom,  
When crashed the dreadful bolt in gathered  
gloom  
Upon his head no warnings made to quail,  
Till from his lips broke forth that cry of wail  
When like a spectre from his father's tomb,  
The thought that blighted long his manhood's  
bloom  
Again before him stalked in cerements pale !

In that same hour he learnt, but then too late,  
 The power that lurked in those divine decrees  
 Which, flying, to evade with so much ease  
 In other years he thought, but found that Fate  
 Watched for him there in ambush, where grown  
 great  
 He long had dwelt secure ! His end who sees ?<sup>1</sup>—

## LXXXII.

Thus evermore it was thy skill to show  
 That laws there are, though oft from human  
 sight  
 Concealed, in which the gods for their delight  
 Have purposed man should walk while here below,

---

<sup>1</sup> The last reflection which occurs to the mind of the chorus in the *Œdipus Tyrannus* :—

“ ὥστε θνητὸν οὐτ’ ἐκείνην τὴν τελευταίαν ἰδεῖν  
 ἡμέραν ἐπισκοποῦντα μηδέν’ ὀλβίζειν, πρὶν ἂν  
 τέρμα τοῦ βίου περάσῃ μηδὲν ἀλγεῖν οὐκ παθῶν.”

How trite—and wordy !

And hold still firm, though mocked with many a  
    woe,

By their unchanging guidance, while the night  
    Lowers darkly o'er the hillside and affright  
Dwells wildly in all clamorous winds that blow !  
And human laws right well thou didst discern  
    Were but as naught when in the balance weighed  
    With those that have no ending. Time has  
    played

Strange pranks with its best playthings, but we turn  
Still to the page where live in lines that burn

The truths that from man's life shall never fade !

. . . . .

## LXXXIII.

What were thy looks, beloved Antigone !<sup>1</sup>

Those looks that did thy radiant spirit veil

So that before thy brow men might not quail

---

<sup>1</sup> Antigone, the daughter of Œdipus, is the most famous heroine of Sophocles. In the drama which is called by her name, he has depicted all that the most ardent worshipper of female excellence can conceive as possible or desirable in the most exalted ideal of womanly character

But only worship what the eye could see,  
That girl-like form's perfection, and the free  
Grace of those youthful limbs that could make  
pale  
The hue of love to sickness, or avail  
To shake the sceptic's doubts of Heaven to be !  
What was those eyes' clear splendour and the  
beam  
That oft-times darkened through them from thy  
soul  
Where seethed those depths of passion whose  
control  
Was the fierce force that swayed thee ! From  
that gleam

---

apart from that Faith which it was not possible, of course, for a Greek of the time of Sophocles to have any knowledge of. The intense love which shines in the words and actions of Antigone—love so pure, so self-sacrificing, that it seems rather like the exhalation of some angelic nature than anything which could emanate from a human heart—her readiness to endure all reproach, and to defy that spiritual wickedness in high places which forbade her to bury her dead brother, the unworthy object of her solicitude, and her unflinching calmness throughout the terrible ordeal she was called upon to undergo—must set her for ever on a pinnacle above all other ideals of merely Pagan Art. She is the ultimate creation of Hellenic poetry. Only Christianity could add a word beyond.

Hate shrank appalled, as from the ocean stream  
Shrinks the wrecked crew when wild the billows  
roll !

## LXXXIV.

Her cheek was like the lily, and her hair  
Was of a beauty richer far than gold ;  
Her smile, they say, could sway men's hearts  
of old  
So that they thought no other form was fair,  
And beautiful she was beyond compare !  
Her form proportioned in the justest mould  
That ever sculptor dreamed of, but to fold  
In one most close embrace, might Fancy dare !  
Her sandalled feet were long the Theban's pride,  
Not that the costly gems which there she  
wore,  
Upon the fastenings, were of value more  
Than queens have sometimes worn, or woe  
betide !  
But there in little space (what shame to hide !)  
Such beauty shone as men must needs adore !—  
H

## LXXXV.

Her horizontal brows, with nicest line  
Were sweetly pencilled, and the soul that gazed  
Into her peerless face—how coldly praised  
In this poor verse !—felt that she was divine,  
If earth has aught not mortal, and for sign  
Her beauty was not mortal, oft there blazed  
A star upon her brow, whose brightness dazed  
The startled sight of those who saw it shine !  
If this were but some stone of rarest worth  
As the carbuncle,<sup>1</sup> now 'twere hard to say,  
Or if it were some orb of living ray  
Plucked from the brow of Night, and flung to earth  
By hand of sprite or genius ; flashing forth  
With sudden gleam, it shone from day to day !

## LXXXVI.

The silky gown her beauteous form displayed  
With all its happy contours, and the zone  
That spanned her peerless waist, more brightly shone

---

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the many and priceless qualities of the gem carbuncle, see Southey's Book, *The Doctor*.

Than the sun's radiance! When abroad she  
 strayed,  
 The grove was filled with music such as played  
 Pan to the listening nymphs, where wild and  
 lone  
 The mountain heights that long were called his  
 own<sup>1</sup>  
 Their stillness round his couch at evening made!  
 For countless nightingales in descants clear  
 Her beauty chanted; 'twas their best-loved  
 strain,  
 Which in her absence thrilled to notes of  
 pain

<sup>1</sup> Sophocles couples the name of Mount Cyllene with that of Pan. His words are (*Ajax*, 694):—

“ὦ Πάν Πάν ἀλίπλαγκτε Κυλλανίας χιονοκτύπου  
 πετραίας ἀπὸ δειράδος φάνηθ', ὦ θεῶν χοροπῶι ἀναξ,” etc.,

but Professor Jebb, whose authority he would be a bold man who would venture to question, says that that deity, whose behaviour at times seems to have been a little erratic, not to say questionable, had a preference for the shady—the Professor says “well-wooded”—heights of Mænalus, and in support of his statement he quotes a half line of *Virgil* (*Geo.* I. 17):—

“Tua si tibi Mænala curæ.”



And was all rapture when they felt her near ;  
 For most they loved to please her listening ear,  
 And for reward her approbation gain.<sup>1</sup>

## LXXXVII.

Her profile was the sculptor's veriest craze,  
 And Venuses in Thebes were multiplied,  
 With such profusion, that on every side  
 Her glorious features caught the upturned gaze,  
 And laurel crowns were theirs and public praise  
 Whose happy art most closely deified  
 The marble with resemblance, oft descried  
 With charm the most in some more passing phase;—  
 Whence came it that in time her beauty gave  
 The rule to sculpture, and no face was fair  
 But such as bore her features, and the rare

---

<sup>1</sup> Antigone herself, in beautiful lines, tells how she heard the nightingales singing in the grove at Colonus :—

“χῶρος δ' ἴδ' ἱρὸς, ὡς σάφ' εἰκάσαι, βρῶων  
 δάφνης, ἐλαίας, ἀμπέλου' πυκνόπτεροι δ'  
 ἔισω κατ' αὐτὸν εὐστομόσιν ἀηδόνες.”

—*Edip. Colon.*, 16-18.

Ethereal sweetness of her looks ! To save  
Those marbles connoisseurs all dangers brave,  
And beard the fiend Oblivion in his lair !

## LXXXVIII.

When swiftly whirling o'er the Pythian plain,  
The car with madding wheels was driven along,  
Were she but seen amidst the princely throng  
Whose place was at the lists, 'twas all in vain  
The foaming coursers plunged, the venal train  
Thundered their plaudits, youths renowned in  
song  
Leant o'er the well-gript reins and hurled the thong,  
Shouting their wildest, the far goal to gain !  
The most alas ! had only eyes for her,  
And gloated on her beauty till they grew  
Almost transformed to stones, and hardly knew  
The race was ended, till perhaps the whirr  
Of passing chariots roused them, or the stir  
Made by the victor with his Helot crew !<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See the magnificent description of a chariot race in the *Electra*.

## LXXXIX.

Her beauty to Religion was great gain,  
For when she to the temple went, be sure  
Folks could no more those heathen gods endure,  
With their abominations, but were fain  
To worship her instead, which gave much pain  
To priests whose office was a sinecure,  
Till a new cult arose, in numbers fewer,  
But not less influential in the main,  
Which paid its vows to her, and flatly swore  
That for those gods, thenceforth they held them  
cheap,  
And for themselves, they would see Thebes a heap  
In ruins laid, before they sought them more ;  
For she was holy, her they would adore—  
And what they vowed full well they meant to keep !

## xc.

How many hearts were broken, truth to tell,  
For love of her, no records now make known,  
But princes wooed her for her golden zone,

And for her beauty, which could even compel  
Brute natures to her service, beasts that dwell  
Far from the haunts of men in deserts lone,  
Ounces, and bearded pards, and lynxes, grown  
Gentle and mild by virtue of that spell !  
And sophists who from musty books their lore  
Had gathered (and the world esteemed them wise)  
Obtained such wealth of wisdom from her eyes  
As made them feel they were but fools before ;  
And straight to fragments all their scrolls they tore,  
And at her feet their passion told with sighs.—

## XCI.

Not only was her beauty famous made<sup>1</sup>  
Throughout all Greece and Asia, by the lays  
Of rhapsodists, who chanted loud her praise

---

<sup>1</sup> I cannot bring this part of my subject to a conclusion without expressing my very great admiration of Sir Richard Jebb's truly excellent edition of *Sophocles*. That work is indeed a monument of scholarship, of exquisite taste, and of astonishing literary skill. The rendering which Sir Richard Jebb has given of the author's thoughts into English, deserves to rank as one of the classics of our language. The happy facility, the grace, the freedom of expression, combined with the closest fidelity to the original, which are never absent from any page of this translation,

In princely bower and hall, where fair displayed  
The wine-cups gleamed, but eastward many a stade  
The Persian satrap bade his watch-fires blaze,  
Purposing devastation, those fair traits  
But to behold that edged with fire his blade !  
For Babylon was minded, in her walls  
To compass whatsoe'er of utmost worth  
Was found in all the regions of the earth,  
And so her king came marching with his thralls  
To take that sun of Greece, that in the halls  
Of Thebes was risen ; but ah ! She went not  
forth.

## XCII.

She went not forth, for soon his cohorts rolled  
Backward and broken o'er the exulting sea,  
That mocked his headlong flight with rapturous  
glee !

---

give it a claim not only upon the attention of the classical student, but of all who love poetry and *belles-lettres*. It is a pity that others of our professors, whose lives are now given up to aimless and elegant trifling at the Universities, do not attempt to emulate *some* of the good qualities which distinguish Sir Richard Jebb's book, and give us a few passable renderings of the Classics. Even *without* genius they might do something.

And now you are all mine—mine—mine to hold—  
For ever mine, as in the days of old,

My M——, Oh, now no more Antigone !

My Bride, my Best-Beloved, whose love to me  
Is more than rank or fame or lands and gold !

And Lady, so—your beauteous hand I kiss

In sign of faithful service, worship true,

In life and death ! We are no longer two,  
But one—not for Time only ! And with this

Upon your lips, dear guerdon of my bliss,

I claim you ! Love, I never loved but you.—

FINIS

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